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FEBRUARY 12, 2001

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THE EDITORS

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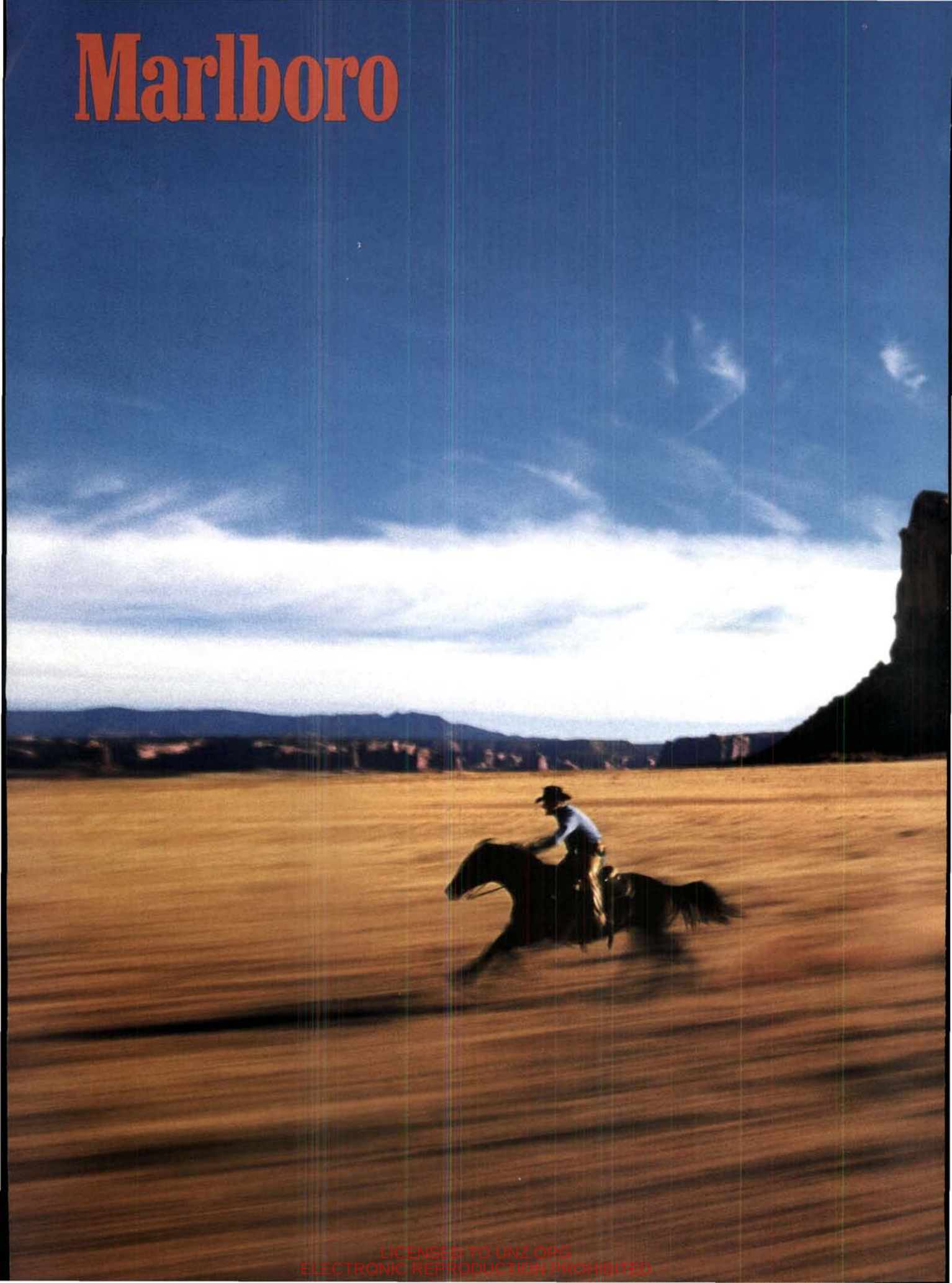

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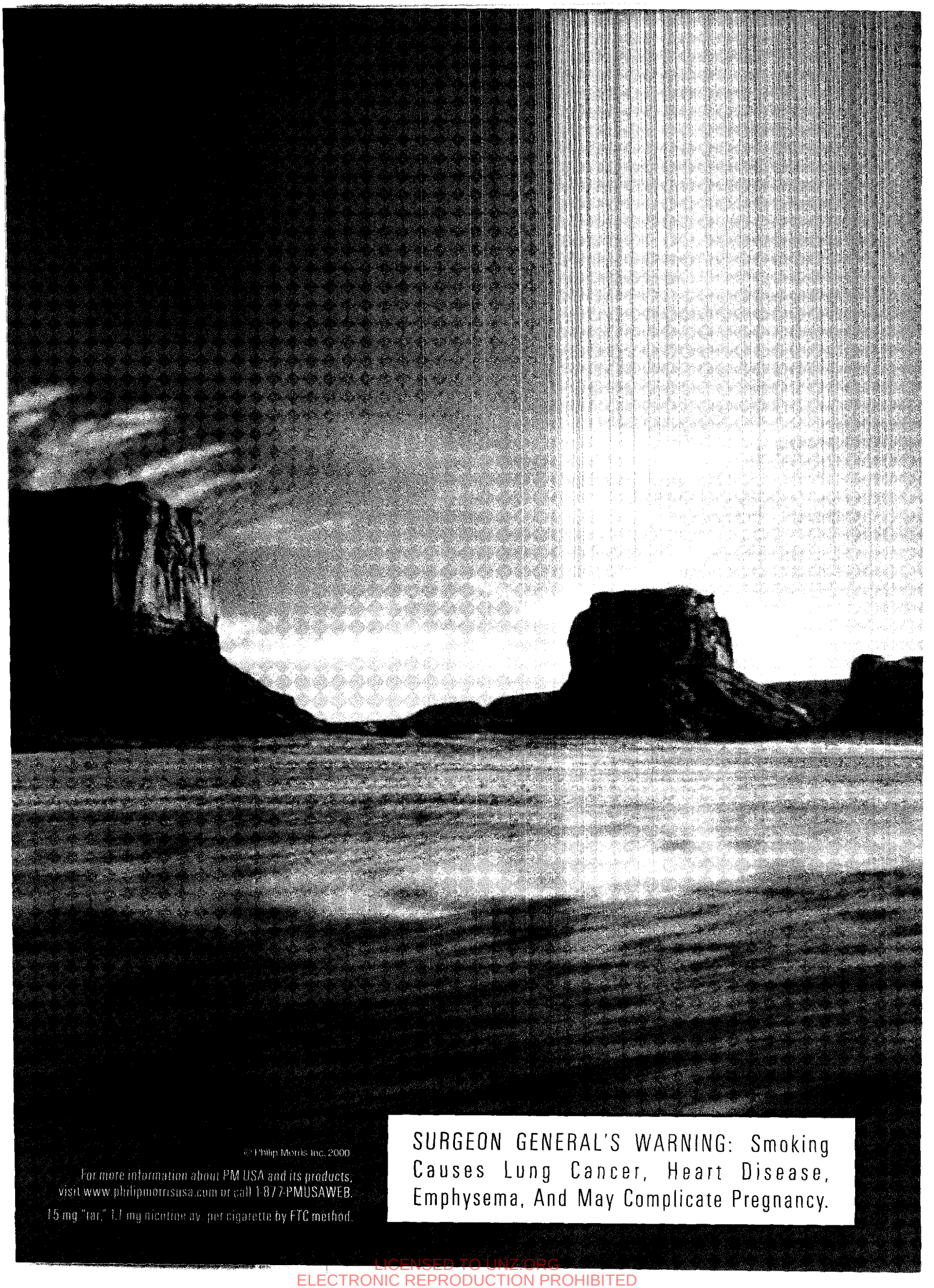

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CORRESPONDENCE

General propriety

TO THE EDITORS:

Before reading Lawrence F. Kaplan's illuminating article, I had almost concluded that nothing in any way critical of General Colin Powell would be published before we have a chance to see what this widely acclaimed icon will do as secretary of state ("Yesterday's Man," January 1 & 8). My reservations about Powell concern not his military service but his decision (especially at and after last year's Republican convention) to engage in partisan politics.

I don't question his right to do so, nor is my objection based on his having opted for the party I didn't support. I do question the propriety of such partisan involvement by one of the country's highest-ranking retired military officers. My concern is for the apolitical image expected of our senior military officers after retirement, unless accepting a political appointment or a political party's nomination for elective office. Generals George Marshall and Dwight Eisenhower are classic examples—Marshall accepted an appointment as secretary of state (later secretary of defense), Eisenhower accepted the Republican Party's nomination for president. Neither had earlier engaged in partisan politics. Their example should be good enough for senior military officers upon retirement. Powell should not have been an exception.

DAVID J. STEINBERG
Alexandria, Virginia

TO THE EDITORS:

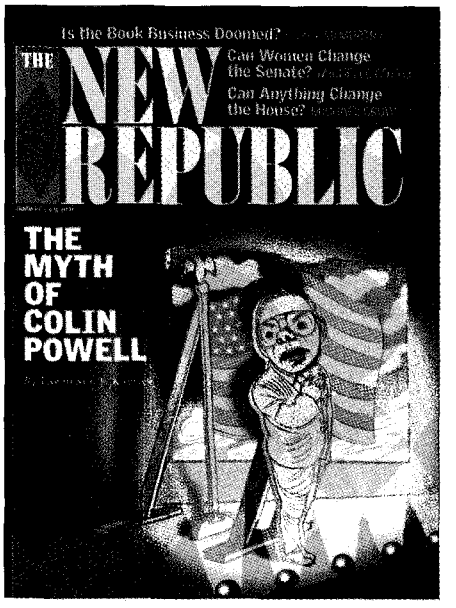
With regard to the foreign policy questions raised in Lawrence F. Kaplan's article, it seems strange that the United States, which is the good guy, does not have a stated ideology, something everyone understands and unites behind. In the case of the United States, the ideology might be the Constitution, which Colin Powell swore to uphold as a soldier. If Secretary of State Powell is in fact a patriot, he will assert that if every nation had a constitution like the United States', there would be world peace and prosperity.

MARK DAVIS
Basehor, Kansas

Showing their colors

TO THE EDITORS:

If Andrew Sullivan is smart—and I think he is—then his paean to the diversity of George W. Bush's Cabinet designees must be an exercise in wishful thinking bordering on monumental self-deception ("Color Scheme," January 1 & 8). W.'s choices do


Is the Book Business Doomed?
THE NEW REPUBLIC
Can Women Change the Senate?
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THE MYTH OF COLIN POWELL

include an ample number of women and minorities, and even some so-called moderates. But the example Sullivan gives for how this crew might "actually change the Republican Party" strains credulity. True, Colin Powell's and Condoleezza Rice's "moderate stances on domestic issues like abortion actually offend important Republican constituencies." But since when are the secretary of state and national security adviser responsible for abortion policy? Powell and Rice will sit out that debate, while staunch anti-abortion hawks like John Ashcroft and Tommy Thompson engineer the Bush administration's assault on choice from their relevant perches as attorney general and secretary of health and human services, respectively. Meanwhile, Bush can playact his favorite role as the Great Conciliator and point to the pro-choicers in his Cabinet, knowing full well that these tokens are utterly powerless to affect abortion policy. This is not "diversity time," as Sullivan crows. It is instead a shameless façade of diversity, manufactured so as not to buck the prevailing conservative orthodoxy on important matters like the opposition to a woman's right to choose. Perhaps Sullivan does know better, and he is simply changing tack from tepid W. supporter to preemptive W. apologist.

JOSEPH T. BASILE
New York, New York

TO THE EDITORS:

Andrew Sullivan's praise of "multicultural conservatism" and John B. Judis's praise of Bush as a conciliator ("Central Casting," January 1 & 8) are utter nonsense. The so-called uniter has already shown his true colors regarding minorities and the environment with the appointments of John Ashcroft, Spencer Abraham, and Christine Todd Whitman. The clever public relations will give way to artful implementation at the lower administrative levels. This policy will neither be moderate nor compassionate.

DENNIS J. PALUMBO
Tempe, Arizona

Estate of nature

TO THE EDITORS:

THE NEW REPUBLIC's insistence that the estate tax is a harmless, necessary source of government revenue baffles me ("Death and Taxes," January 1 & 8). First there is the editorial's underlying assumption that wealthy people don't deserve their wealth, or at least don't deserve to bequeath it to their loved ones. The editors provide no logical foundation for these assumptions, yet there they are. I also take issue with the presumed necessity of the estate tax to fund Medicaid, Social Security, etc. The advantage of private inheritance is that the inheritors don't have to depend on the government. I think of inheritance as the original social security. Rather than tax it, we ought to applaud it.

TIM RICHMOND
Pleasant Valley, New York

TO THE EDITORS:

TNR rightly points out that estate taxes have a long and proud history in our nation. In fact, the promotion of an estate tax can be found in the work of Adam Smith. Smith taught the students who attended his lectures on jurisprudence that "there is no point more difficult to account for than the right we conceive men to have to dispose of their goods after death," and he thought intestate succession to family members was clearly justified only when necessary to provide for dependent children. Thomas Jefferson, who described Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* as "the best book extant" on political economy, famously wondered whether all hereditary privileges should be abolished, since "the earth belongs in usufruct to the living." That the dead should have a hold over property arrangements among the living is a notion we need to regard with very great suspicion. The free-market assumptions on which this country is based depend crucially on the notion that people should as much as possible have equal opportunity to rise in society and that they should as much as possible earn their own wealth. The principle of inheritance defies both of these assumptions. We allow it anyway for a variety of reasons, but it is very much in line with our fundamental beliefs to limit it. So the phi-

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losophy of freedom behind American capitalism practically demands an estate tax.

SAM FLEISCHACKER
Associate Professor of Philosophy
University of Illinois, Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

Ghosts

TO THE EDITORS:

Benjamin Soskis's comparison of George W. Bush to Thomas Jefferson is unfair on one point ("Man in the Mirror," January 1 & 8). Soskis cites a passage from *A Charge to Keep* as proof of W.'s idiocy. That is unfair, as it is highly unlikely that Bush actually wrote that book.

NOAH KLINGER
Washington, D.C.

Stalin's courtesan

TO THE EDITORS:

I am baffled by the claim advanced by Alan Brinkley that W. E. B. Du Bois "never became a Stalinist," especially considering that, in his review of David Levering Lewis's biography of Du Bois, Brinkley notes that Du Bois joined the U.S. Communist Party in 1961 ("Autumn of the Agitator," January 1 & 8). When Joseph Stalin died, Du Bois published a eulogy for him in the March 16, 1953, issue of *The National Guardian*. Du Bois wrote:

> Joseph Stalin was a great man; few other men of the 20th century approach his stature. He was simple, calm and courageous. He seldom lost his poise; pondered his problems slowly, made his decisions clearly and firmly; never yielded to ostentation nor coyly refrained from holding his rightful place with dignity.... Stalin was not a man of conventional learning; he was much more than that: he was a man who thought deeply, read understandingly and listened to wisdom, no matter whence it came. He was attacked and slandered as few men of power have been; yet he seldom lost his courtesy and balance.... His judgment of men was profound. He early saw through the flamboyance and exhibitionism of Trotsky, who fooled the world, and especially America. The whole ill-bred and insulting attitude of Liberals in the U.S. today began with our naïve acceptance of Trotsky's magnificent lying propaganda, which he carried around the world. Against it, Stalin stood like a rock and moved neither right nor left, as he continued to advance toward a real socialism instead of the sham Trotsky offered.... Such was the man who lies dead, still the butt of noisy jackals and of the ill-bred men of some parts of the distempered West. In life he suffered under continuous and studied insult; he was forced to make bitter decisions on his own lone responsibility. His reward comes as the common man stands in solemn acclaim.

Stalin "never yielded to ostentation" and "seldom lost his courtesy and balance"? Perhaps this was not Stalinism; perhaps Du Bois was suffering from some obscure form of mental illness, previously undiagnosed. Or perhaps the most obvious explanation is the best: An aged Du Bois had become a shameless courtesan speaking the words his patrons wanted to hear. When Du Bois became an editor of *The New Masses* in 1946, George S. Schuyler publicly denounced him for hiring out with "Stalin's literary gendarme."

STEPHEN SCHWARTZ
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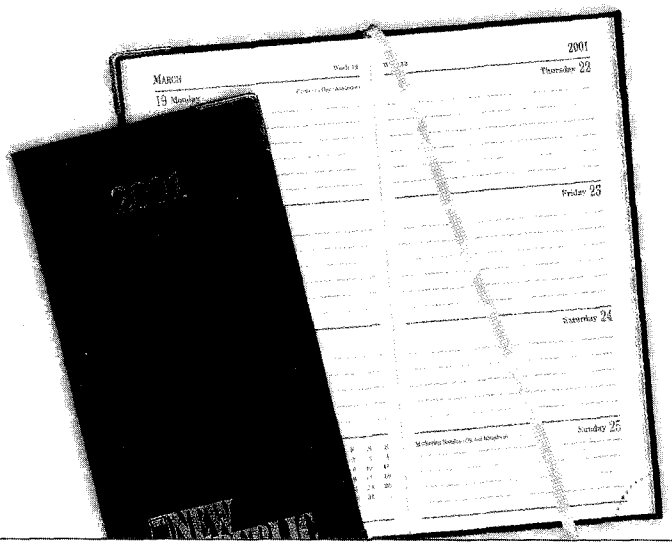

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

All in the Family

WATCHING THE REPUBLICAN Party try to come to terms with several million gay voters reminds me a little of my uncle. He's the only family member I'm estranged from, because he regards my sexual orientation as a deliberate rebuke to God. When he heard I had contracted HIV, he told me in a letter, in so many words, that I deserved it and that only the Holy Spirit could cure me. He's also, I might add, a good person: kind, loving, and decent, if not the brightest bulb on the Christmas tree.

The human question is: How do I get along with him? My human answer: I don't. After his letter about my illness, in which he couldn't even bring himself to ask how I was, I cut him off. In most families with gay members there's something of this sort going on. So I completely understand the impulse to ostracize someone who has decided that a religious fiat, which by definition cannot be challenged, requires him to reject and hurt a loved one.

In a family, we can get away with such anger and hurt. But in politics such emotionally satisfying options come at a price: impasse, conflict, and little progress. That's why the knee-jerk attempt to turn George W. Bush into a homophobe is, in my view, misguided. It's misguided, first of all, because it's clear he isn't one. And it's misguided also because it will create an atmosphere that, while making a few gays feel better, makes many more worse off. We need to change a paradigm in which one side sees only bigots and the other side sees only perverts. This election presents us with a chance.

How? The first step is to resist at every opportunity the notion that homosexuals are defined by victimhood. If you look at the agenda of, say, the leading gay lobby, the Human Rights Campaign, you'll see what I mean. Its priorities are laws that protect gays from hate crimes and employment discrimination. Both proposals rely for their effectiveness on the notion that gay men and women be seen as the objects of physical violence and routine oppression in the workplace. But the number of hate crimes perpetrated against gay people is relatively puny, and such crimes are already covered under existing criminal law. And it's ludicrous to look at the gay population and see millions of people who have a hard time finding or keeping a job. In those states where anti-discrimination laws for gays are in effect, the number of lawsuits filed is negligible. But the real harm of these campaigns isn't just that they add new, largely pointless laws; it's that they portray homosexuals as downtrodden and weak.

To put it bluntly, we're not. We have survived a health crisis that would have destroyed—and is destroying—other populations, due in no small part to our tenacity, compassion, and organization. We are represented in almost every major cultural, political, and social organization, often leading them. Gay strength can be seen everywhere—from courageous high school kids organizing support groups to a young lesbian serving as an indispensable aide to Dick Cheney's vice presidential campaign. The media is saturated with gay talent, images, and skill. An honest gay agenda should capitalize on this truth, not flee from it.

And that agenda is something the new administration could be part of. Call it a shift from a politics of identity to a politics of inclusion. Here are a few starting points of commonality that are neither gay nor straight but could bring the two groups together: retaining Bill Clinton's executive order forbidding discrimination in federal employment; abolishing the estate tax, which discriminates against gay couples denied the right to inherit from a legal spouse; establishing school choice, to give parents of gay kids leverage if their children are bullied or neglected; reforming the tax code to eliminate the exclusively heterosexual benefits added in the Clinton years; protecting pharmaceutical research from populist assault, to maintain the progress against HIV; ending the ban on HIV-positive immigrants and allowing them to become citizens; and securing Internet privacy, to protect a group uniquely connected by an anonymous information network. On the last issue, even John Ashcroft might agree.

Many homosexuals will disagree with some of these objectives. And nothing's stopping them from voting for Democrats. But many, many homosexuals agree with these policies, and if gays were allowed to participate in crafting and selling them, Bush might create the beginnings of a new gay-straight alliance. One million gay voters backed Bush last November. If the president is able to include without pandering, in four years two million might. Some of this can be achieved quite easily. Dick Cheney's inclusive remarks in the vice presidential debate won many people over. Lynne Cheney's recent comments that some hip-hop music denigrates "women and gay people" helped as well. Clinton showed the power of symbolism. What harm could Bush do by occasionally referring to the gay community as comprising citizens he respects and wants to reach out to?

Which means, in turn, that there must be no more talk of homosexuality somehow being a "private" matter. It's no more private than heterosexuality, and the closet is not a means for inclusion; it's a means to silence and exclude. That doesn't mean all gay people have to wear their orientation on their sleeve. But there should be no lies or euphemisms, either. Without an openly gay person in a prominent sub-Cabinet position, the new paradigm will be a nonstarter. Why not someone under Ashcroft at the Justice Department?

Similarly, although I'm under no illusion that the ban on gays in the military will end soon, a test of the administration's good faith will be the rate of gay discharges. If it falls below Clinton-Gore levels, we'll notice. It was encouraging that Dan Coats was nixed for defense secretary, but it's not enough. Marriage rights, mercifully, are the purview of the states and the courts.

Real, hard differences will endure, of course. There will always be a segment of the GOP that, like my uncle, sees any inclusion of gay citizens as a betrayal. Rumors are already floating around Washington's gay community that low-level Bush transition officials are directly asking applicants if they are gay or not. That must stop. And there will always be a hard-left core of gay activists who thrive on division. But the GOP still retains echoes of the ancient legacy of Lincoln. And the individualist, libertarian strain in gay culture is a natural ally for Republicans not intent on neotheocracy. The recent creation of the Republican Unity Coalition, a gay-straight political group, is a promising start. But more is needed.

To the question "Can't we all just get along?" the answer is a clear no. The moral disagreements are too deep to be easily elided. But to the question "Can we coexist as citizens?" the answer is surely more complicated. Yes, with a certain level of civility and restraint, we can. The country can ill afford to ostracize either its sizable fundamentalist minority or its flourishing gay citizenry. We are not a family; we're a single nation. And in single nations common ground is not just possible, it's essential. President Bush has a chance to make history if he finds it.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

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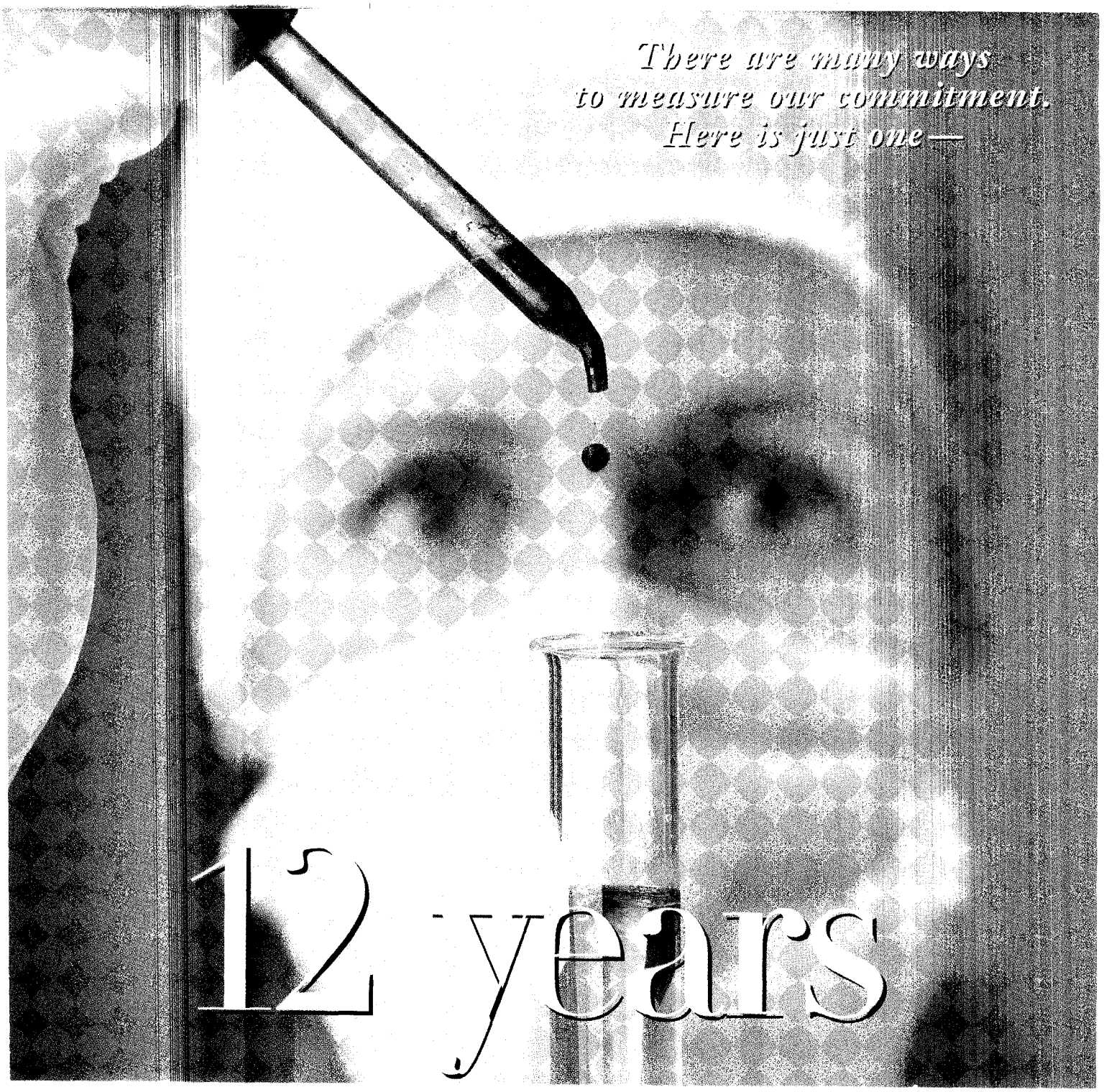

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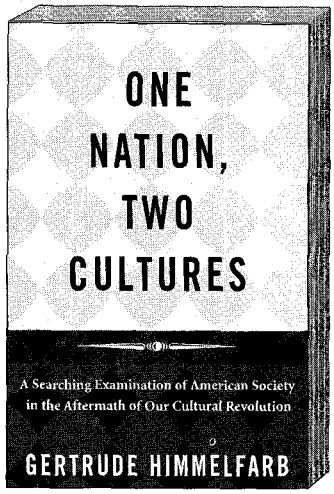
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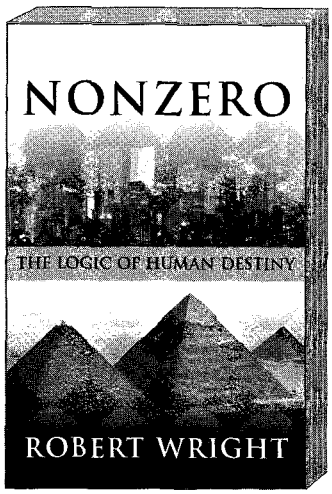

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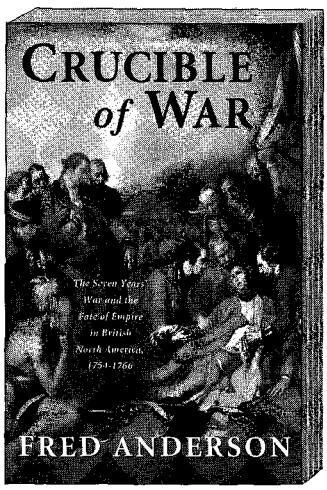

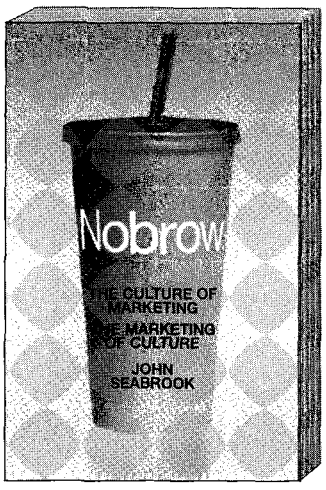

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—*The Boston Globe*

"[Seabrook's] thesis—and catchy name for it—is almost irresistible as a way of describing the effect marketing is having on culture." —*Time*

With a new Afterword

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"An insightful look at the science of human emotions.... A rare example of the fusing of scientific rigor with literary eloquence."
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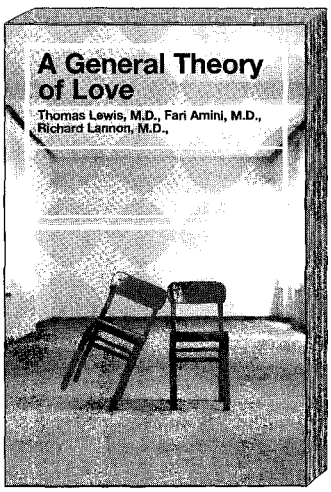

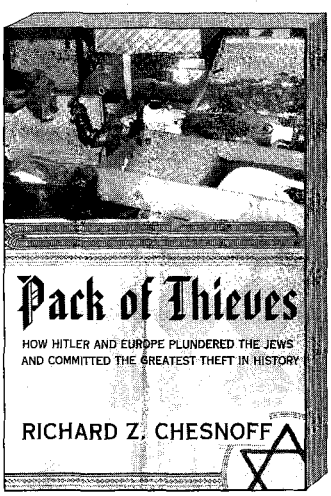
Pack of Thieves
HOW HITLER AND EUROPE PLUNDERED THE JEWS AND COMMITTED THE GREATEST THEFT IN HISTORY
RICHARD Z. CHESNOFF

"Written with great skill and sensitivity, Richard Chesnoff's book deals with one of the most urgent moral problems of the postwar era." —Elie Wiesel

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The Pathetic Party

BARELY A WEEK into George W. Bush's presidency, his tax cut seems almost inevitable. The Democrats appear set to repeat their sordid performance of 20 years ago—when, instead of resisting Ronald Reagan's tax cut, they larded it with special-interest subsidies of their own. The size of the tax cut acceptable to Democrats edges up almost daily, from $500 billion to (as we go to press) $850 billion. Republicans, meanwhile, have begun predicting that the eventual tax cut might end up even *larger* than Bush's bloated proposal. "The chances of a tax-cut feeding frenzy," crows Lawrence Kudlow, a Bush adviser, "are growing daily." It's disturbing enough that fiscal policy is in the hands of people who use the phrase "feeding frenzy" to describe a process they see as beneficial. What's more disturbing is that Kudlow's prediction could be right.

We've come a long way in the last month—in exactly the wrong direction. When the Supreme Court made Bush president, it was widely assumed he would have to govern as a moderate, which would mean, at the very least, scaling back his enormous tax cut. The voting public, after all, had evinced no enthusiasm for it whatsoever. Al Gore had won the popular vote in part by hammering the tax cut as an irresponsible sop to the wealthy. Even before that, in the *Republican* primary, John McCain had condemned the Bush cut on similar grounds. GOP congressional candidates ran away from Bush's plan. Poll after poll showed tax cuts far down the list of public priorities.

There are several explanations for why the ground has shifted so quickly—and none of them makes fiscal or moral sense. First, Bush seized upon the slowing economy to justify his tax cut. But most economists (including those who work for Bush) say that it can't be implemented fast enough to have an impact and that business-cycle management should be left to the Federal Reserve. Then Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan gave his blessing, disheartening Democrats who shared his now-abandoned emphasis on debt reduction.

Greenspan's endorsement carried such political weight in part because he had spent the previous eight years urging fiscal restraint. And so his dramatic turnabout is taken as evidence that the budgetary outlook must have changed dramatically. In fact, surplus projections have not changed much since the last time Greenspan spoke. What has changed is the administration. During the Clinton era, the right-leaning Greenspan was afraid of spending hikes—a prospect he helped ward off with his advocacy of debt reduction. Now, with a Republican in the White House, he no longer needs to use fiscal conservatism as an argument against spending increases and can feel free to push for tax cuts.

Meanwhile, a stream of ever more optimistic budget-surplus projections has anesthetized deficit hawks, creating an expectation that federal revenues will expand forever, permanently obviating the need for painful trade-offs. And it is true that the budget has produced pleasant surprises for several years running. But the proper lesson to take from this is not that budget projections are always too conservative—indeed, historically they've usually erred on the side of optimism—but that they're not very accurate. The further into the future the number-crunchers gaze, the hazier their vision gets. Moreover, even if today's rosy forecasts do come to pass, the picture will almost certainly darken in ten years or so, when the baby-boomers' retirement begins to soak up a larger share of the budget. At that point, if Bush has blown the surplus on tax cuts, the government will plunge back into the deficit-ridden fiscal paralysis from which it has only recently escaped.

Given this prospect, the Democrats' acquiescence to the Bush tax cut is baffling. Their surrender to Reagan at least occurred at the apogee of a decade-long revolt against government. Today, no such hostility exists. The mania for large, upper-bracket tax cuts is largely a product of the Beltway echo chamber. In a recent national opinion poll on how best to direct the surplus, tax cuts came in dead last—behind social spending, shoring up Social Security, and debt reduction. Acceding to bad policy in the face of strong public sentiment—as the Democrats did in 1981—may be cowardly. But doing so in the absence of public pressure is just plain pathetic. ■

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NOTEBOOK

FOOL US ONCE...: Following Alan Greenspan's embrace of big tax cuts last week, Democrats rather pathetically tried to emphasize various caveats and hedges in the Great Man's testimony. The point they should have made was: Why listen to him at all? It's the Federal Reserve chairman's job to react to short-term fluctuations in economic growth and inflation. It's not his job to decide the size and shape of government. When Greenspan does the latter, his views are informed not by any special knowledge obtained at the Federal Reserve but by his long history as a conservative Republican. And those ideological preferences have been disastrously wrongheaded in the past. In 1980, Greenspan vouchsafed that Ronald Reagan's plan to slash taxes and boost defense spending would not result in budget deficits. "To argue that Governor Reagan's program is irresponsible is nonsensical," he insisted. With a track record like that, no wonder they call him Maestro.

THE VERDICT: "Change can now be imagined," enthused Ronald Neumann, then the State Department's point man on Libya, in a 1999 speech. "Libya is not Iraq. We do not seek to maintain sanctions until there is a change of regime in Tripoli." Well, there hasn't been a change of regime in Libya—as we were reminded this week when one of the current regime's intelligence agents, Abdel Basset Ali al-Megrahi, was found guilty in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103. There has, however, been a change of administration in Washington. And how the Bush team responds to the Lockerbie verdict will tell us much about the depth of the new president's commitment to fighting terrorism. When it comes to Libya, the Bushies could hardly be worse than the Clintonites—who backed the de facto lifting of U.N. sanctions against Qaddafi, granted waivers for U.S. companies surveying Libyan oil fields, and permitted agribusiness executives to do business there. "The government of Libya," says Bush spokesman Ari Fleischer, "must take responsibility" for the bombing. But Libya says it will not. So what now? Secretary of State Colin Powell has said he hopes to "get rid of most" unilateral sanctions, save those against Iraq and Cuba. The State Department bureaucracy has been lobbying for years to improve ties with Libya. And oil-industry flacks have seized on the verdict as an opportunity to press for warmer relations. The trial, after all, is now behind us. There's just one problem: Al-Megrahi may have pulled the trigger, but the person who bears ultimate responsibility for the murder of 189 Americans is still at large. And he's running Libya.

DEPLETED: In the non-peace non-process in the Middle East, Yasir Arafat's maximalism has been trouble enough; but now, in the grim run-up to the Israeli election, Israelis have to come to grips with Arafat's hallucinations as well. In his speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where he might have been expected to explore ways to bring his unhappy people some of the blandishments of globalization, Arafat elected to accuse Israel of using depleted uranium weapons in its "fascistic" operations against the Palestinians. Depleted uranium weapons are, of course, the military paranoia of the season. Needless to say, there is no evidence at all for Arafat's allegation. As United Press International laconically reported, "there have been no cases in which Palestinians suffered from cancers as a result of absorbing radiation." It also reported that Abu Safeya, the Palestinian minister for the environment, asserted that no fewer than 1,800 Palestinians have been injured by missiles "that really include uranium." Then, in flagrant contradiction to his own outrage, the minister explained that the chairman was concerned only about the effect that radiation

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might have on the environment. Never mind that in the environment of Palestine there is no radiation. Then Arafat gave a TV interview in which he added his fantasies about the past to his fantasies about the present. The phrase "Temple Mount," he said, was a Crusader term and "not a Jewish one." If Arafat really wants to engage in political philology, he might consider that Jewish terms for this sacred spot antedate the Crusaders by a few thousand years. He could start, for example, with the word "Moriah." And then, insisting that he would respect the right of Jews to pray at the Western Wall, Arafat poignantly recalled that as a child he "spent hours there, watching the Jews pray," and cited the 1930 report of the Shaw Commission, established in the wake of Arab anti-Jewish riots, as having pronounced that the Wall was a Jewish holy site. When did the British Mandate acquire such authority in Palestinian eyes? (The Shaw Report, yes; the Balfour Declaration, no.) But there is a good reason that Arafat recalls the Shaw Report with such fondness. It was a triumph for Palestinian extremism, since it exonerated the Palestinian leadership of the violence and blamed it on the Jews themselves. As Yehoshua Porath writes in his authoritative history of the Palestinian national movement, "The spirit prevailing in the report of the Shaw Commission ... was that the rioting was a product of the cumulative effect of Zionist activity in the country and had not been premeditated." Come to think of it, Arafat would like nothing more than for a contemporary equivalent of that commission to make a judgment—a tendentious pro-Palestinian judgment—about the present crisis. Ariel Sharon really does not deserve to have it this easy.

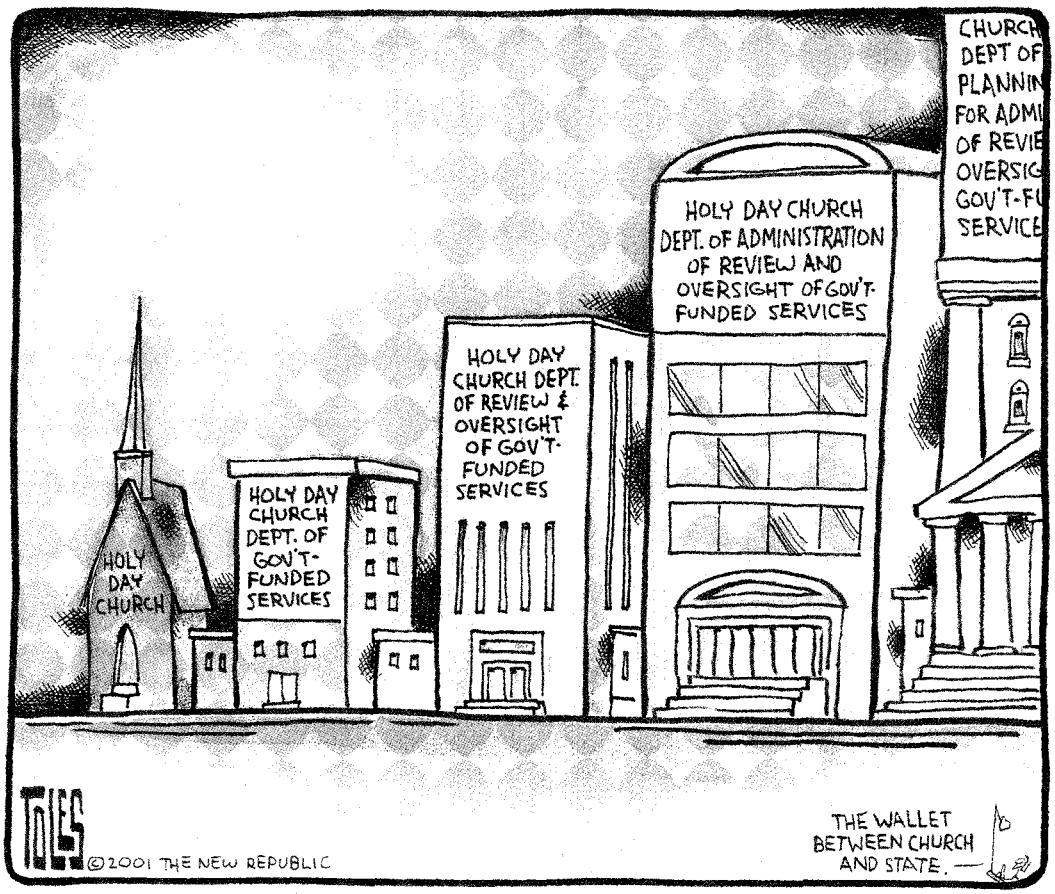
WHY EVERYONE HATES THE MEDIA: This week, the muckraking website "The Smoking Gun" (*www.thesmokinggun.com*) offered a glimpse of the way big-time journalists compete for interviews, posting a dozen letters from members of the Fourth Estate to Ted Kaczynski, the convicted killer known as the Unabomber. Kaczynski had donated the letters, written in 1998 and 1999, to the University of Michigan. A sampling:

"I was born not far from where you now live, and have a cabin in the woods west of Colorado Springs that has no electricity or running water.... I, and a lot of people, want to know how the better angels of your nature can justify the violence your convictions required."—Don Dahler, "Good Morning America"

"Please understand that *60 Minutes II* is NOT the program on which your brother and mother appeared. They appeared on *60 Minutes* with Mike Wallace and Leslie Stahl.... Our story will allow you to personally refute what they said about you as well as provide a serious forum for your ideas."—Shawn Efran, "60 Minutes II"

"I am writing an article about the influence of violence in the media on human behavior. I'm particularly interested in why certain people feel the need to act out what they have read in books or seen in movies. Your connection to Conrad's novel "The Secret Agent" is what prompted this letter.... Also, I read that you included a novel, "Ice Brothers," in the bomb that you sent Percy Wood. What was the meaning of that?"—Lawrence Wright, *The New Yorker*

"If you know anything about Roseanne, you must know that she is a non-conformist and rarely does what society expects of her. I believe you and her would definitely 'hit it off' and the conversation would definitely be interesting and fulfilling for the both of you."—Larry Ish, "The Roseanne Show" ■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NPR sells out.

Mixed Signal

By Sarah Wildman

A year ago, when the Federal Communications Commission proposed giving low-power radio stations licenses on the FM dial, they knew they'd get flak from big broadcasting. The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), after all, spends millions lobbying to keep everybody else off the radio spectrum—even locally managed, noncommercial stations that broadcast only within a four-mile radius. Sure enough, when the FCC proposed its new regulations, the NAB began screaming about all the terrible things those tiny radio transmitters could do to the big ones, whose signals are 500 times as strong and whose reach is nearly 20 times as far.

It was a pretty thin argument. So thin, in fact, that for a while it appeared the proposed regulations might survive the lobbying onslaught. And then the FCC and its allies ran into a most unlikely opponent, one with the moral authority to do real damage to their cause: National Public Radio. In fact, two prominent pro-consumer Democrats, Massachusetts's John Kerry and Oregon's Ron Wyden, have cited NPR's impact on their decision to oppose the FCC's low-power initiative. "It's absolutely, one hundred percent very clear that Ron Wyden and John Kerry were heavily influenced by NPR," says Cheryl Leanza of the nonprofit Media Access Project. "Individuals who would have been incredibly friendly to diverse voices on the airwaves ... were swayed." And, quite possibly, duped.

It's hard to blame them for assuming NPR was looking out for the public interest. After all, NPR was born from the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, which called for it to "encourage the development of programming that involves creative risks and that addresses the needs of unserved and underserved audiences" while creating "programs of high quality, diversity, creativity, excellence, and innovation which are obtained from diverse sources." The charter, in other words, describes exactly the kind of programming low-power radio might provide, particularly in rural or heavily immigrant communities where locally oriented programming could be more useful than such nationally syndicated shows as "Morning Edition" or "Car Talk." But the well-meaning lefties at NPR didn't see low-power radio as a potential ally or kindred spirit. They saw it just as the big broadcasters did—as a threat—and tried to squash it in much the same way.

They may have succeeded. A last-minute rider in December's Senate appropriations bill (which eventually became law) severely handicaps the low-power initiative. Specifically, it limits the licensing of low-power radio to just nine test markets, enforcing restrictions that effectively keep it out of urban areas and other major markets. It also mandates testing to determine the economic impact on established broadcasters. And, though John McCain has vowed to continue the fight for low power, for now at least NPR has won the day.

The primary motivation behind opening the airwaves to low-power radio was to undo the damage wrought by the Telecommunications Act of 1996. That law was supposed to increase competition on the airwaves. Instead, it consolidated control of radio stations in the hands of a few large, national companies that syndicate programs (or even whole broadcasts) to their affiliates, thus squeezing out local programming. By allowing small, noncommercial stations to break into the spectrum, the FCC hoped to reintroduce local material in places where it has all but vanished. In its application process, the FCC privileged local content and community involvement—for example, assigning spectrum space to stations in primarily Latino areas that broadcast family-planning information in Spanish. Part of the application asked aspiring broadcasters how their stations would serve their neighborhoods.

It was the kind of project that then-FCC Chairman William Kennard assumed NPR would support: "I wanted the FCC to link arms with NPR and expand opportunities for noncommercial radio in this country," he says. But NPR came out early against the FCC plan for low-power radio and never wavered. "I proffered this list of concessions we would give, but, before I even got a response, NPR issued a press release supporting the Wilson-Dingell amendment," says Kennard, referring to one of the more restrictive measures against low power in the House. "The negotiation was all a charade. They were never going to support it." Indeed, though NPR insists it supports low-power radio in principle—and while some Senate staffers suggest that the FCC could have mollified public radio's advocates had Kennard been more tactically adroit—NPR's technical objections are less than compelling, suggesting ulterior motives. "What's happened is that NPR has pushed stations to carry national programming. They do very little locally originated programming," says Peter Franck, an entertainment lawyer with the National Lawyer's Guild and past president of Pacifica Radio. "They were worried that [the initiative] would lose audience for them. [That's] not an appropriate concern for public broadcasting." Michael Bracy, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based Low Power Radio Coalition, agrees: "Never in two years did NPR ever come forward with a credible proposal to resolve this."

Consider what seems like one of NPR's strongest arguments—an argument on behalf of "radio reading services" for the blind, which broadcast newspapers, bus schedules, supermarket specials, and other information for the visually impaired. These broadcasts are carried by subcarrier channels, which transmit using a small segment of a larger station's FM signal. The average clock radio filters out these signals automatically, so to receive the broadcasts you must purchase special receivers that don't block out the signals. According to NPR, because these special receivers are so sensitive, they're also susceptible to interference from

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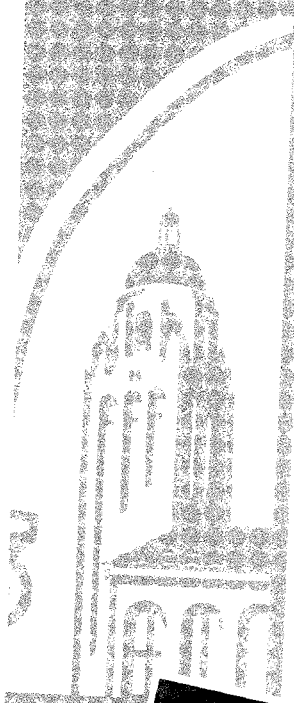
Europe—One Number for the New President to Call?

Timothy Garton Ash is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution.



Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

While the United States has been trying to settle on a new president, the European Union (EU) has been trying to find a new structure. The new structure is necessary as the EU prepares to absorb the states of the eastern half of Europe, a historic undertaking that will eventually double the union's size. But **what kind of partner will the resulting EU-rope be for the United States?** Will this be a United States of Europe? Will there be one phone number that the U.S. president can call?

The EU summit in Nice in early December indicated the likely answer. In five days of extraordinary horse trading between the leaders of the current 15 member states, ending with a round of exhausted applause at 4:25 in the morning, the EU took significant steps toward both greater integration and enlargement. It agreed on the terms for a European Rapid Reaction Force to intervene in future Kosovos, which will serve as a complement to NATO.

The EU also agreed to more use of so-called qualified majority voting on a range of issues internal to the Union. The use of new voting weights was designed not just for existing members but for twelve countries, from Poland to Malta and Estonia to Romania, that are currently negotiating to join the union. This was the subject of the fiercest wrangling: Should Germany have more votes than France, or Spain than Poland? How should the balance be struck between the few large and the many small states in Europe? The bargaining, all conducted behind closed doors, reminded me of a modern Congress of Vienna.

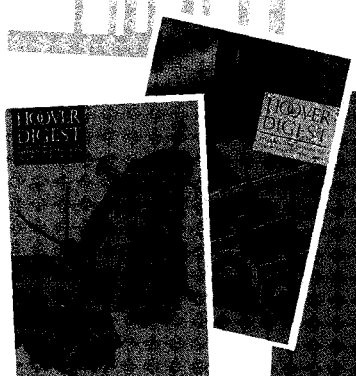
A whole range of countries defended their national vetoes in particular fields: the French on cultural imports (against U.S. cultural hegemony), the Germans on asylum and immigration, the British, Swedes, Luxembourgeons on taxation, and so on.

All national governments in Europe fight fiercely for their national interests. Progress on the big, difficult issues is made by intergovernmental bargaining. European federalists, especially those in the European Parliament and the European Commission, have expressed disappointment at both the process and the result.

"And yet it moves," as Galileo famously remarked. In time, we will see a larger EU. Its member states will do a large number of things together, through supranational institutions, especially in trade and the regulation of economic life. There will also be smaller groups of member states that go further, through intergovernmental cooperation in particular areas. These include such vital matters as the single currency and the abolition of border controls, as well as enhanced environmental protection and foreign policy actions in response to specific crises. In short, **as the EU gets larger, the post-Nice EU will become more complex and polycentric,** with intergovernmental cooperation remaining as important as supranational integration.

So, will there be one phone number for the new U.S. president to call? No. Is that a bad thing? Not necessarily. Better to have a complex structure that works, and commands some minimum of consent from its peoples, than a simple one that doesn't.

— *Timothy Garton Ash*



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low-power radio stations.

The FCC disagrees. Nevertheless, it tried to assuage NPR's concerns by agreeing "to study how to best protect these services" and, for the time being, not to license low-power broadcasts where they might conflict with reading services except in carefully controlled tests. "We carved out an exception," says Kennard, "that said we would not license a low-power station in any community that has radio reading services. We gave them a blanket exemption—even though we believed that there would not be harmful interference to those services."

That should have been enough. After all, only about 200 stations carry radio reading services at all—just a fraction of the 8,032 FM stations broadcasting. But NPR wouldn't budge, calling the problem a deal breaker. "It gives them license to come in and do tests," fumes Kevin Klose, the former *Washington Post* reporter who is now NPR's president. Radio reading services are, he says, "underfunded in every community," and "[their] listeners are not in the mainstream because they cannot see. It's an outrage."

NPR'S OTHER OBJECTIONS to low-power radio were even more nakedly self-serving. The FCC proposal would have opened up more space on the FM dial by allowing stations to broadcast on frequencies closer to each other. Under current law, two full-power 50,000-watt stations can't broadcast within three spaces, or "channels," on the dial. (This means that if a station is broadcasting at 100.3, no other station can broadcast above 99.5 or below 101.1.) Because low-power stations don't "bleed" as far into the spectrum—that is, because there's less danger that a signal will also be picked up slightly higher or lower on the dial—the FCC proposed allowing low-power stations to broadcast within just two adjacent channels.

NPR objected, arguing that the "reserved" band of the FM spectrum set aside for noncommercial radio—between 87.9 and 91.9—is already too crowded. But this objection is less valid than it seems. The FCC was proposing to allow low-power radio stations, despite their noncommercial status, to broadcast anywhere on the dial, so most new stations wouldn't have affected NPR.

NPR also complained that second-adjacent-channel protection would endanger public-radio "translator" stations. Translators are essentially relay stations, found primarily in remote areas, that pick up a signal at the end of a broadcasting range—say, on the top of a mountain—and then rebroadcast it to an area out of range, like the valley below. But there is no reason to believe second-adjacent-channel protection would impair translators. In fact, Michael Brasher, general manager of NPR affiliate KANW in Albuquerque, New Mexico, acknowledges that "[w]e already have translators operating on second adjacent channels, and they don't cause interference."

Brasher, who is not shy about his disagreement with NPR's national leadership, says radio needs to "speak to many voices and dialects.... Low power would have helped [NPR] in doing that." And he is not alone. Frank Mankiewicz, NPR president from 1977 to 1983, argues that the interference argument is "not reason enough to oppose" low-power radio, given that the FCC has promised to shut down stations that interfere with existing full-power broadcasters. Oregon Public Broadcasting has also broken with the national position, causing considerable embarrassment to Wyden, who publicly opposed the FCC initiative only to have the NPR affiliate in his home state turn around and disagree with him. House Minority Whip David Bonior, generally a public-radio proponent, was so infuriated by NPR's stance on low-power radio that, in protest, he voted against NPR's federal funding in the last Congress. NPR, Bonior says, "is the big established voice now in the country, and they obviously have forgotten their roots." Unfortunately, it's the big established voices that usually get heard. ■

Brcko Dispatch

Frozen

By JOSHUA HAMMER

SPRAWLED ALONG THE Croatian border in northeastern Bosnia, the town of Brcko was a big prize in the bloody Balkan war. The site of three years of bitter fighting between Croats, Muslims, and Serbs, Brcko was so contentious that the framers of the 1995 Dayton peace accord left its fate unresolved. Instead, an independent arbitrator decreed in 1998 that the city would belong neither to Republika Srpska (the Serb-controlled half of the country) nor to the Muslim-Croat Federation. The town was declared a "district," with its own schools, police, and local government. Western officials hoped Brcko would serve as a model for multiethnic coexistence.

Last month, I went with a colleague to see how this utopian vision was shaping up. We made the two-hour drive from Banja Luka, the capital of Republika Srpska, zigzagging through the countryside on a "highway" stitched together from two-lane rural back roads so Serbs traveling from their capital can avoid Croat-controlled territory. It was Orthodox Christmas, and Brcko's downtown streets, now controlled by the Serbs, were deserted. We drove past bullet-pocked buildings and a "multiethnic" high school that was recently rocked by violent protests: Hundreds of Serb students, outraged at having to share their building with Muslims, had overturned cars and trashed Muslim property.

We turned onto Jalan Malaysia, an asphalt road lined with a hodgepodge of newly built houses and abandoned, war-shattered structures. With money from Saudi Arabia, Muslims have been rebuilding homes here, and victims of ethnic cleansing are trickling back. In front of a new house built over a furniture-repair shop, I met Sulejman Sakic, 46, who had just returned after five years in Muslim-controlled Tuzla. I asked him if he had any contact with Brcko's Serbs, whose

JOSHUA HAMMER is Jerusalem bureau chief for *Newsweek* and author of *Chosen by God: A Brother's Journey*.

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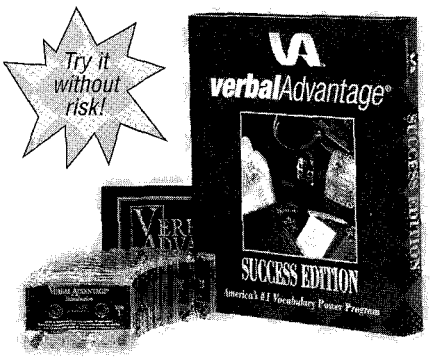

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neighborhood begins a few hundred yards down the road. Sometimes, he replied: "They drive by to taunt us. The Serbs tell us openly, 'Didn't we kill you? Didn't we rape you? Didn't we burn your houses? Why do you want to live with us?'"

Sakic's neighbor Vahid Tahto, 42, wandered over. A skinny, gray-faced man with a harelip, Tahto asked me if the rumors that George W. Bush was planning to pull American peacekeepers out of Bosnia were true. (American soldiers in Humvees patrol his street a couple of times a day.) And he scoffed at the idea that British and French troops alone could keep the peace. Flinching at the crackle of celebratory Christmas gunshots from the Serb side of town, Tahto pointed toward a newly built Orthodox church steeple looming over Brcko. "The Serbs will use that as a sniper position when the war begins again," he said.

So much for multiethnic coexistence. Five years after the Dayton peace accord, Bosnia remains a country in name only. Beneath the façade of stability and peace—a peace largely imposed by 20,000 international peacekeepers—Serbs, Croats, and Muslims remain bitterly divided. Schools are segregated. More than one million Bosnians are either refugees or internally displaced, and war criminals remain in key positions in both the police and local government. Civil institutions barely function. The old wartime oligarchy continues to dominate the economy, corruption is pervasive, and private investment is almost nonexistent. "After five years and five billion dollars, the international community has yet to achieve a single change that is self-sustaining," says James Lyon, director of the Bosnia project of the International Crisis Group, an organization of independent analysts. "We pull out tomorrow and everything will collapse."

DURING HIS PRESIDENTIAL campaign, Bush suggested withdrawing American forces from Bosnia and Kosovo and leaving peacekeeping there to the European allies. NATO leaders see a U.S. pullout as a dangerous abdication of America's international responsibilities. But on the ground the fear is more concrete: U.S. soldiers and Muslim refugees alike predict that without the American troops, war might well begin anew. "The Europeans did nothing for us during the war," Tahto told me. "We don't trust them."

Some international experts say that the ultranationalists who fueled the fratricidal wars of the 1990s are growing weaker now that Croatia's Franjo Tudjman is dead and Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic has been deposed. If only they were right. In last November's elections, nationalists enjoyed gains across the country, despite the efforts of Bosnia's chief international administrator, Austrian diplomat Wolfgang Petrisch, to promote liberal parties. In Republika Srpska, moderate President Milorad Dodik was crushed by a hardcore nationalist from the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS), the wartime Serb alliance co-founded by fugitive war criminal Radovan Karadzic. In the Muslim-Croat Federation, Croats voted overwhelmingly for the ultranationalist Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ). Muslims also stood behind their wartime Party for Democratic Action, despite overwhelming evidence of mismanagement and corruption.

With nationalists still holding sway, there's been little effort to forge pan-ethnic Bosnian unity. True, there's a common currency, license plate, and passport, as well as a handful of shared institutions, including the customs service and the national parliament. But aside from these tokens—all created by the Dayton accord—the lack of cooperation is pervasive. Police departments, utilities, school systems, even cellular-phone networks are divided along ethnic lines. Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians have their own armies (each closely monitored by NATO forces that don't allow more than three soldiers to leave the barracks at one time without supervision). And Bosnia now has 13 constitutions, one each for Bosnia, Republika Srpska, the Muslim-Croat Federation, and the Federation's ten cantons, which are mostly divided into Croat or Muslim enclaves.

AND IT'S NOT just cantons. Cities and even neighborhoods are rigidly divided. The southern town of Mostar, once the object of ferocious fighting between Muslims and Croats, is today a study in Bosnian apartheid: Muslims live on the east side, separated from the Croat west by "the Boulevard," a war-scarred green line of gutted apartment blocks and office buildings. Croat nationalists have blocked all but 300 Muslim families, out of 8,000 who've applied, from reclaiming their homes in the west. The flag of "Herceg-Bosna," the Croatian enclave that the Bosnian Croat army tried to carve out of Bosnia, flutters from hundreds of lampposts in Croat territory. Jakob Finci, the leader of the Jewish community of Sarajevo, recounted a conversation with a ten-year-old Croat boy in Mostar. "I asked him, 'Do you have any Muslim friends?' And he answered, 'I've never even seen any Muslims.'"

The situation across the border in Republika Srpska is even worse. There, obstructionist SDS leaders have blocked the return of refugees and winked as Serb civilians threaten those who've dared come back. (U.S. peacekeepers say the only people who return are the old and infirm, "people who are coming home to die.") In Srebrenica, the former U.N. safe haven where thousands of Muslims were massacred in 1995, fewer than a dozen Muslims have returned. Even the dead can't go home: The remains of at least 4,000 victims of the Srebrenica massacre lie in cold storage in Tuzla because Serb politicians won't let their families build a memorial park near the area where they were murdered.

Even more ominous, separatist ideology is being passed on to the next generation. Croat textbooks in Bosnia instruct Croat students that their "president" is Tudjman, the fiercely nationalistic leader of Croatia who died last year. Bosnian Serb children learn that they're part of "the Serb nation" and that their capital is Belgrade, not Sarajevo. Attempts by Petrisch, the country's international administrator, to build a multiethnic educational system have failed. His team has created three schools where Muslim and Croat students share one building, but students still learn in separate classes with separate textbooks and separate teachers. On the bright side, observes the country's education chief, Claude Kieffer, "The teachers all share one faculty lounge. And the kids sometimes play together during recess." That's about as hopeful as it gets. ■

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Can the Texas GOP survive W.'s departure?

Lone Star

By Bryan Curtis

Republicans hope George W. Bush can do for the national GOP what he did for the party in Texas: build a political majority capable of enduring once he leaves office. But their premise is flawed—in Texas, Bush did no such thing. He led the Texas Republican Party to victory, but he didn't reshape it. And, because he didn't, its future looks uncertain at best. In fact, the state party that Republicans hail as a national model may be on the verge of electoral meltdown.

During Bush's time as governor, three factors underlay the Texas GOP's success: overwhelming support from middle-class and upper-middle-class white suburbanites, respectable showings among Hispanics, and a lack of viable, well-funded Democratic opponents. Problem is, with Bush gone, it's likely none of these factors will exist when Texans go to the polls in 2002.

White suburban Texans are conservative, but nowhere near as conservative as the leadership of the Texas Republican Party—whose platform opposes abortion for any reason and says sodomy should be a criminal offense. Democrat Ann Richards won the state's governorship in 1990 in part because Republican Clayton Williams alienated suburban white moderates, especially women, with his right-wing zealotry—epitomized by his infamous statement that rape victims should "lie back and enjoy it." Bush won back those suburbanites in 1994 by steering clear of divisive social issues. But, instead of installing moderates atop the state GOP, he left the party in the hands of the religious right and simply ignored its platform.

The religious right's control of the party leadership didn't matter much while Bush occupied the governor's mansion. But now that he has handed the reins to former Lieutenant Governor Rick Perry, who lacks Bush's popular appeal and fund-raising prowess, that leadership seems likely to grow more powerful. The most influential Republican in Texas today may well be Jim Leininger, a far-right San Antonio millionaire who fronted Republican candidates $3.8 million in 1998. In fact, Perry owes his narrow victory in the 1998 lieutenant governor's race in large part to a last-minute $1.1 million loan linked to Leininger, who also helped finance his campaign plane. Tom Pauken, an outspoken social conservative and former head of the state GOP, says, "Jim Leininger wants to influence the process, and Jim will have lots of influence in a Perry administration." One area where his influence has already been felt is school vouchers—an issue Bush shied away from but over which Perry as lieutenant governor waged a high-profile fight.

Leininger has other avenues of influence as well. Given Perry's relatively low profile, the party's top two leaders, one of whom is a former Leininger employee, will likely play a more prominent role in the 2002 elections. The party chairwoman is Susan Weddington, an anti-gay activist and former president of Winning Strategies, a right-wing political consulting firm founded by Leininger. The vice chairman is David Barton, who runs WallBuilders, which advocates dismantling the separation between church and state. The more visible these leaders become, the more likely white suburban moderates are to defect to the Democrats. In fact, the large influx of high-tech workers into Texas over the past decade has probably made the suburbs even more socially moderate than they were when Richards beat Williams. As University of Texas political scientist Bruce Buchanan puts it, "There's kind of a Democratic push from the urban centers out into the suburbs ... which puts our state in play in terms of its future national identity. It's up for grabs."

The second secret of Bush's success was his relative strength among Hispanics. In 1998, he won around 40 percent of their vote, and he was the first Republican gubernatorial candidate to carry El Paso County. But Bush's success, which was based in part on massively outspending his Democratic opponent in Hispanic areas, has not carried over to the party as a whole. In 1998, Hispanic support for Perry and other Republicans lagged about ten points behind Bush's. Asked in a recent survey which party they more closely identify with, 67 percent of Texas Hispanics picked the Democrats, while only 22 percent chose the GOP. Divide the survey's self-described independents along those lines and you arrive at a 75-25 split—what Austin GOP pollster Mike Baselice calls the "break-even" point for Republican candidates. "When you start getting down around twenty percent of the Hispanic vote," says Baselice, "you've got some problems as a Republican."

Bush's Hispanic strategy worked in part because he ran against Garry Mauro, an underfinanced Anglo Democrat. But the Democratic gubernatorial nominee in 2002 will probably be neither. Tony Sanchez, a Hispanic oilman whom Bush appointed to the University of Texas Board of Regents in 1997, is quietly preparing a gubernatorial run. When he was appointed to the board, Sanchez was viewed as little more than another Bush loyalist on a board already filled with them (Don Evans, Bush's new commerce secretary, served as the board's chairman). In fact, Sanchez has contributed more than $100,000 to Bush's gubernatorial campaigns and gave another $100,000 to his presidential run, earning him the distinction "pioneer."

But now Sanchez is preparing to run for governor himself, as a Democrat. And, unlike Bush's 1998 opponent, Sanchez, who commands a fortune worth upward of $650 million, won't be underfunded. In the coming weeks, Sanchez is expected to name former San Antonio Mayor Henry Cisneros to a high-profile position in his campaign. A former president of the cable giant Univision, Cisneros is one of the few Hispanic politicians with strong ties to the state's business community, and his connections should benefit the entire Democratic ticket. Sanchez will be joined on the slate by a

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number of other well-financed Democrats.

The danger for Republicans is not just that Sanchez's candidacy will mobilize Hispanics to turn out in unprecedented numbers for the entire Democratic ticket—it could also cement their allegiance to the party for years to come. Rodolfo de la Garza, vice president of the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute at the University of Texas, speaks of the "Californiafication of Texas politics." In California in the mid- to late '90s, Hispanic turnout increased sharply at the same time Hispanics grew more solidly Democratic. One reason was Republican Governor Pete Wilson's attacks on illegal immigrants. But another was the increasing prominence of Hispanic Democrats. The enthusiasm for Hispanic Democrats helped Anglo Democrats as well and contributed to the collapse of the California GOP.

In 1998, when Bush garnered around 40 percent of the Hispanic vote, the Democrats didn't field a single prominent statewide Hispanic candidate. But de la Garza sees signs that the party—with Tony Sanchez as its standard-bearer—has begun following the California model. The University of Houston's Richard Murray predicts that Sanchez could boost Hispanic turnout from 14 percent of the state electorate in 2000 to nearly 20 percent in 2002. African Americans account for another 12 percent of the voting population, and if Democrats win practically all their votes, they'll need only 30 to 35 percent of white suburbanites. In a contest against a Christian-right-identified Republican, that's achievable.

Which is why Texas Republicans seem more than a little nervous. Hungry to put a Hispanic on their ticket as well, prominent Republicans are rumored to be urging Senator Phil Gramm, who is up for reelection in 2002, to step down and let Perry replace him with Hispanic GOP Representative Henry Bonilla. Bonilla, Republicans hope, would build enduring Hispanic support for the GOP, cementing the party's dominance for elections to come. In other words, succeed where the president of the United States failed. ■

White House Watch

Schooled

By Ryan Lizza

In 1997, when President Clinton proposed voluntary national testing of fourth graders in reading and eighth graders in math, he unleashed the full fury of the religious right. Lynne Cheney, then a "Crossfire" pundit, demanded of one of her guests, "Don't you think we should learn from experience... that national standards in testing are a disaster?" A consortium of eleven conservative groups, led by Gary Bauer's Family Research Council, Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, and Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum, spearheaded the opposition to Clinton's plan on Capitol Hill. John Ashcroft threatened a filibuster in the Senate. The proposal ultimately died when all but three House Republicans voted to kill its funding. All in all, the crusade against national testing was one of the right's most effective lobbying campaigns of the Clinton era.

Enter George W. Bush and his federal education plan. While vouchers have grabbed the headlines, they're likely to be bargained away. The plan's major thrust is testing. When the president recently visited a Washington, D.C., school to highlight his education proposal, he talked exclusively about testing, mentioning it ten times in a ten-minute speech. "Testing children," he said, "is the cornerstone of reform. I believe it's the essence of excellence in education." Unlike Clinton, who wanted voluntary testing only in the fourth and eighth grades, Bush is calling for mandatory testing in math and reading in every grade from third through eighth. Federal funding for schools would be tied to students' progress on these exams. And what does the right have to say about these new federally mandated tests? So far, the silence has been deafening. As the Progressive Policy Institute's Andy Rotherham, a former Clinton education adviser, says, "If a Democrat had proposed this, all hell would be breaking loose."

To be sure, there is a difference between Bush's testing regime and Clinton's. Bush would mandate that the states, not the federal government, design and administer the tests. "The essential difference," says the Family Research Council's Robert Morrison, "is that states are adopting this. It's not a national plan." But examine the Bush proposal's fine print and you realize that the distinction isn't as great as it seems. That's because Bush wisely insists that state educators prove to the feds that any gains shown by their state tests be "confirmed" by—you guessed it—a national test. In each state, Bush would use a sample of fourth and eighth graders' results on the respected National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to check whether state test results are legitimate. So a state can develop any test it wants, but in the long run its NAEP scores are what will really count. It's not hard to see where this will lead: Eventually, states will learn to use NAEP as the model for their own tests and expend resources teaching students how to excel on it. "It will be a backdoor national curriculum," warns Monty Neill of the liberal anti-testing group FairTest.

But none of this seems to bother the people who torpedoed Clinton's national testing plan. Schlafly insists, "I don't think it [the Bush plan] is an increased federal role." Home-schooling proponent Michael Farris predicts, "Conservatives are going to either support it or abstain." Peter Hoekstra, the Republican congressman from Michigan who serves as the religious right's point man on education in the House, adds, "Everyone is giving the president the benefit of the doubt."

The education plan, in fact, is a case study in how effectively Bush manages the different wings of the once-fractious GOP. To ensure conservative input, Bush brought in education wonks respected on the right, hiring Nina Rees of the Heritage Foundation and Townsend Lange McNitt, a top aide to Judd Gregg—the most influential Republican on education policy in the Senate. Top Bushies also stayed in constant communication with a broader group of social-conservative bigwigs. Farris, like many other movement conservatives, says he talks regularly to Karl Rove, who serves as the president's liaison to the right. When Bush unveiled his education plan last summer, Stephen Goldsmith, his domes-

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tic policy adviser during the campaign, held a private briefing for conservatives in Washington to explain the plan and ensure their issues were addressed.

And they have been. Bush has taken the edge off right-wing opposition to testing by larding his education plan with pet conservative ideas like block grants, phonics, education savings accounts, protections for home-schoolers, and funds for schools to block Internet porn. And, contrary to popular belief, Bush's apparent caving on vouchers is no big deal for many on the right: Lots of religious conservatives don't like Bush's plan to use federal money for private schools anyway, because they fear it may lead to federal regulation of private education.

Farris calls Bush's balancing act a "plan of first priorities": Bush pays scrupulous attention to the first priorities of each subgroup of the Republican coalition while letting it be known that second and third priorities may take a backseat. For religious conservatives, appointing pro-lifers John Ashcroft and Tommy Thompson to head the Justice Department and the Department of Health and Human Services and restoring the ban on federal funds to overseas abortion-providers are the first priorities, and they give Bush leeway on issues like testing. Environmentally minded Northeastern Republicans get Christine Todd Whitman at the Environmental Protection Agency—even as property-rights activists in the West get Gale Norton at Interior. Bush's administration is multicultural, which pleases moderates; but social liberals like Whitman and Colin Powell are confined to positions where they can't affect the policy that really matters to the right. In his inaugural address, Bush spoke at length about the poor, but in the kind of biblical language social conservatives like to hear. Though his speech mentioned synagogues and mosques, the benedictions that preceded and followed it invoked Jesus. Just this week, Bush walked the tightrope again, launching a faith-based initiative that social conservatives love but naming a Catholic New Democrat, John DiIulio Jr., and a Jew, Goldsmith, to run it.

So far, both the right and the center are pleased as punch, and journalists are hailing the administration's strategic brilliance. Then again, it's only Bush's second week. ■

W. and the uses of testing.

Numbers Racket

By STEPHEN METCALF

THAT SOUND YOU didn't hear last month was Rod Paige, President Bush's pick for secretary of education, schussing quietly through his confirmation hearing. While Attorney General-designate John Ashcroft was enduring a barrage of liberal broadsides, Paige showed up before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions with Representative Sheila Jackson Lee at his side. An African American Democrat with a child in the Houston school system, where Paige became superintendent in 1994, Jackson Lee all but locked up Paige's confirmation with her gracious introduction. Aside from some mild throat-clearing from Senators Christopher Dodd, Paul Wellstone, and Ted Kennedy, the committee greeted Paige like a nonpartisan godsend, a man everyone could feel good about confirming.

The line on Paige is that he's a pragmatist with no firm commitments other than that children learn. But that's not quite right. Paige is devoted to "high-stakes testing," which means rewarding, or punishing, everyone—children, schools, even himself—for students' performance on standardized tests. And he believes in an expanded role for the private sector, particularly corporations, in public education. In other words, he believes in the same things George W. Bush does. Which is why Houston serves as a useful model for how Bush's educational philosophy—as manifested in the massive education bill he's sending to Congress—would change America's schools. If the Senate committee had examined that model more closely, Paige's confirmation hearing might not have been such a yawn.

THE MOVE THAT defined Paige's seven-year tenure in Houston was his decentralization of the city's school system. He handed over more authority to principals while demanding they meet strict standards for student performance. (Sound familiar?) Upping the ante, Paige offered school administrators a 10 to 15 percent pay hike if they would relinquish tenure. Then, as now, the buzzword was "accountability": Test scores would rise and dropout rates would fall—or heads would roll. Proving he was serious, Paige allowed his own compensation to be pegged to test improvements as well.

As part of his effort to turn things around, Paige outsourced services for the system's most troubled kids to a for-profit company called Community Education Partners (CEP). The Houston school district has a "zero-tolerance" policy for violent offenders in schools. But offenders aren't simply kicked out, which would boost dropout rates. Instead, under a 1995 Texas law, they are sent to "alternative schools." And soon after Bush, as governor, signed that law, a group of powerful Tennessee Republicans with ties to Lamar Alexander, Bush père's education secretary, established CEP. The company's first chairman (he has since stepped down) was a generous GOP benefactor: In the 2000 election cycle, he gave more than $25,000 to Republican causes, including W.'s presidential campaign.

In 1997, Paige signed up CEP to educate the district's problem kids. When the company opened its first Houston campus, in a renovated Wal-Mart, the elder Bush was on hand to dedicate it. Paige sold the relationship as win-win: Students who wanted to learn would no longer be burdened by troublemakers, and the troublemakers would attend a school designed to meet their needs. In addition, Paige negotiated a contract that underscored his insistence on accountability—CEP guaranteed that if students didn't reach certain educational goals in the allotted time, the company would "continue to provide educational services to these students

STEPHEN METCALF is a writer living in New York.

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at no additional cost," as Paige explained in a 1997 editorial in the *Houston Chronicle*. That editorial was co-authored with a Houston education gadfly named George Scott, who, as a member of a local watchdog group, had complained for years about the quality of the city's public schools. Together Paige and Scott proclaimed the "bold new contract" with CEP a triumph, a "warranty" that would help Texas maintain its reputation as a "national leader in the pursuit of rigorous accountability." Four years later, Paige still testifies to the contract's success. Scott, however, now says it's a "sham."

DAVID COWLES

Others agree. Kathryn Montross had served for eight years as a regional administrator and principal in the Dallas public schools when she arrived at CEP in the summer of 2000. She liked the company's philosophy of giving a last chance to kids who might otherwise slide into the correctional system, and she took a job as one of the top Houston administrators. In her first week, she recalls, CEP's chief operating officer praised her as "a prize quarterback," selected in the "first round of the draft." But problems began almost immediately. Before her first semester even started, Montross says she discovered that close to 100 angry parents either had yet to receive their children's report cards from the previous year or had received report cards they couldn't decipher. "The grades, the number of days present or absent, the number of credits," Montross says, "[the parents] were very, very concerned."

When she complained about the chaos, she says, her superiors said, "Don't worry," and told her to proceed with the new semester. But Montross sent an employee to look for the missing report cards anyway, and they were found near a pile of ungraded exams. When Montross asked how those students could have received grades if their exams were not marked, a CEP administrator told her the grades had been made up. A dumbstruck Montross went to her immediate superior, Anthony Edwards, who she says counseled her to ignore the charge. Montross says she next called the chief operating officer who had praised her the week before. He too seemed unconcerned. Later that evening, according to Montross, Edwards assembled everyone still in the building, including her. Charging her with "gross incompetence" and violating the chain of command by going over his head, he asked someone to escort her out of the building. He now says Montross "never brought [the ungraded exams] to my attention" and claims her dismissal was unrelated to the alleged fraud. She has filed a lawsuit against CEP, claiming the company fired her for refusing to act illegally on its behalf.

A woman who worked as a record keeper at the school corroborates Montross's account, describing a system in which kids often received credit for work they hadn't done. "They didn't grade all the exams because they were so understaffed at the time," she recalls. "There were students who got credit for classes they completed in one morning." Another ex-CEP teacher adds, "I've seen grades pop up out of nowhere." One administrator who had been in charge of academic affairs says she regularly saw report cards where "everything was a fifty or a seventy," grades she believes bore little relation to actual student work.

The company's CEO, Randle Richardson, disputes Montross's story. "She was with us twenty-seven days, never was there when school [was] in session, she got cross with Anthony Edwards, and now, to collect money, she's got to go out and say these people are doing wrong things," he says. Both the company and the Houston school district claim that "CEP is in compliance," according to Cephus Jackson, the administrator who now oversees CEP's contract. As evidence, he cites an investigation by Gordon Anderson, a retired Texas school superintendent CEP brought in to examine charges of academic malfeasance when Montross's allegations first surfaced in *The Houston Press*, a local newspaper. Anderson's report found some administrative snafus but no serious wrongdoing. But CEP booster-turned-critic George Scott points out that the report is anything but independent, given that Anderson has worked for CEP on and off in the past. Richardson readily admits this, adding that he was so impressed with Anderson that he has hired him to "[do] our operations work."

THE SCHOOL STANDS accused of more than just fudging students' grades. CEP's critics also charge it with purposefully depressing the scores of incoming students—"Our typical student is an eighth or ninth grader reading at about the third-grade level when they come to us," Richardson claims—to make it easier to meet the contract's requirement that student performance improve. One former administrator explains that incoming students are pegged to a grade level based on their lowest diagnostic score, whether that score is representative or not. For example, if a student is tested on several math skills and scores at a sixth-grade level on all but one, on which he scores at a second-grade level, he is tallied at the second-grade level. Under this method, the academic growth CEP promises is almost inevitable. As one angry parent puts it, "They said that my son was ... doing math at a third-grade level. Yet he was passing algebra when he left his home school to go to CEP.... It's just a bunch of crap."

Given the conditions at the school, it's no wonder its officials were loath to accurately measure students' performance. "It was such a fiasco over there," says one administrator who worked at CEP from 1998 through 2000. She describes a "revolving door" of teachers, constant violence, and poor supervision of kids. Another teacher, who stayed for two years, says one adult would often have to supervise a class of 30 or 40 kids, making teaching impossible (CEP boasts that it has a student-teacher ratio of twelve to one). She saw fights and drugs on a daily basis. But "as long as ...

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there weren't police or newspaper people, everything was fine," she says with a rueful laugh.

One ex-CEP student, "Tommy," entered the school voluntarily because he liked its self-paced program. He quickly became a star pupil and was profiled by the local media. Soon he was the building's tour guide, showing around visitors and officials from other school districts interested in doing business with CEP. Tommy now describes the tours as "bullshit," adding, "It was like a jail.... We were supposed to be honors students. You'd think you'd have a nice, quiet classroom. [But] you got people playing, you got fights going on." In return for his upbeat tours, Tommy says, school officials would often buy him pizza or fast food.

In fact, school administrators, sometimes with the assistance of the city, seemed to go to extraordinary lengths to prevent independent oversight. David Wingard, a former education staffer in the Texas state Senate, set up the initial contract with CEP in Texas's Harris County—"I'm sad to say I was instrumental"—then routinely found the company not in compliance, primarily on safety issues and in providing materials to students. "It was just mayhem," says Wingard, who was put in charge of CEP's contract by a Harris County judge. Wingard has since resigned in a dispute with the judge involving CEP's performance, and his relationship with the company has degenerated into a vicious feud. Most of the other outside observers who tried to measure CEP's performance had similar experiences, finding the school woefully lacking. Thomas Kellow was a research specialist in the Houston school district's Department of Research and Accountability in September 1999, when Paige's office asked him to conduct a "performance audit" of the CEP program. Putting aside the data CEP provided him, Kellow concentrated on independent measurements, most notably the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS)—Bush's and Paige's own favorite high-stakes test—and the Stanford 9, a highly respected national exam. The numbers startled him: "The longer the kids stayed in the program, the worse their academic performance was." Kellow reported his discoveries to his superiors. (Richardson and Mary Jane Pearson, CEP's chief academic officer, dispute Kellow's findings, though both admit they have not seen his report.)

Four months later, perusing the school district's website, Kellow came across a press release about a visit by Paige to the Manhattan Institute, a conservative think tank in New York City. Appearing with right-wing education commentator Diane Ravitch and a CEP official, Paige effusively praised CEP's Houston program. "I'm a great admirer of [CEP]," Paige said, describing how the company had transformed some of the district's toughest children into "productive students." The press release boasted of an average growth in reading of 2.4 grade levels and an average growth in math of 2.2. "When I saw this," says Kellow, "I just about hit the roof." Kellow sent an electronic message to 1,800 statisticians on the American Evaluation Association's electronic discussion group. He wrote: "I have no idea where he got this data, unless the negative gain signs in my report were altered to be a plus. I am furious."

Soon Kellow was receiving calls from officials in the Philadelphia school district, who were negotiating a contract with CEP and were curious about his findings. Within a few weeks, Kellow was called to the office of Paige's assistant superintendent. Kellow saw the writing on the wall: "Before I left that day, I backed up my computer files," he recalls. He also absconded with a copy of his report. Sure enough, the next day he found that the contents of his hard drive had been copied and he could no longer print from his computer. "Am I terminated?" he asked the assistant superintendent. No, he was told, just "reprimanded" and moved to a workstation without Internet access. Kellow promptly quit.

The story of CEP in Houston is only the story of one program. But it suggests the dangers of the Bush-Paige education model. As with CEP's school for troubled kids, there is strong evidence that the entire Houston school district—indeed, the entire state of Texas—played fast and loose to achieve the test scores and lower dropout rates that Paige and Bush demanded. Much-hyped improvements on Texas's in-state accountability exam (the vaunted TAAS) hardly show up anywhere else in the alphabet soup of national standardized tests: not on the SAT, the ACT, the NAEP. When the nonpartisan RAND Corporation examined the discrepancy, it concluded that there were "serious questions about the validity of the TAAS scores." The Harvard Civil Rights Project has concurred, adding that in order to raise TAAS scores, Texas schools effectively exempt the kids least likely to pass—predominantly, poor blacks and Hispanics (see "Only a Test," by Jonathan Weisman, TNR, April 10, 2000). It also concluded that phony reporting by Texas principals massively underestimates dropout rates—particularly in Houston. Until this year, the city reported an "official" dropout rate of 3.9 percent, a figure contradicted by researchers from Johns Hopkins and the Harvard Civil Rights Project, which place it closer to 50 percent.

The lesson of CEP in Houston is not that testing kids is a bad idea. It's Mark Twain's old lesson about "lies, damn lies, and statistics." Quantifying educational performance is fine, but if you don't give schools the resources to truly help kids learn—better teachers, smaller classes, and so forth—schools will meet those numerical goals however they can, often by cooking the books. The danger is even greater when you outsource education to well-connected corporations with the political muscle to stymie careful oversight. And Bush has strong ties to corporations that could benefit enormously from his insistence on nationwide testing. For instance, Terry McGraw, one of the CEOs highlighted at Bush's recent "Education Leader" conference, runs McGraw-Hill—one of the biggest producers of tests in the country. In fact, a large number of the experts who advised Bush in his 1996 and 1997 "Governor's Reading Summits," helping fashion literacy policies in Texas, write literacy textbooks for McGraw-Hill.

Will Houston's experience be replicated throughout the country as a whole? No one knows, but the question certainly merits more attention than it got at Paige's confirmation hearing last month. As one woman who worked at CEP puts it: "Rod Paige's scores in Houston look good on paper. But he sacrificed so many kids to get there." ■

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Why Zell Miller screws the Democrats.

Man From Hope

By JASON ZENGERLE

AS REPUBLICANS MOURNED the sudden death of Georgia Senator Paul Coverdell last July, Democrats, ever mindful of decorum, struggled to contain their glee that Georgia's Democratic governor had appointed former Governor Zell Miller to fill the empty seat. Not only was Miller a Democrat, bringing his party one seat closer to taking back the Senate; he was a Democratic legend. The man after whom many Southern Democrats, most notably Bill Clinton, had modeled themselves, the 68-year-old Miller had left politics in 1999 as a two-term governor with a remarkable 85 percent approval rating. His return, one Democrat told a *Florida Times-Union* reporter, was "like having Michael Jordan coming out of retirement."

But last week, when Miller joined Texas Republican Phil Gramm in co-sponsoring President Bush's $1.6 trillion tax cut—just days after Miller pledged to support the nomination of John Ashcroft for attorney general—it was the Democrats who were mourning. With the Senate split 50-50, it's devastating when any Democrat strays from the party line. But the fact that it was Miller, a party legend, made it even worse. James Carville, who forged a close relationship with Miller while working on his 1990 and 1994 gubernatorial campaigns, practically views it as a personal betrayal. "In many ways," says Carville, "this is more painful than the Lewinsky thing."

Miller's defections, however, shouldn't come as a shock. Democrats' image of Miller—as a staunch partisan who showed his party how to hold off a rising Republican tide in the South—was already out-of-date. Yes, he did once serve as a model for a new kind of Southern Democrat. But Miller, a savvy politician, never wedded himself to the model he created. As Georgia's political circumstances changed, Miller changed along with them, morphing from a partisan populist fighting for the rural working man into a nonpartisan populist fighting for the suburban professional. "I'm completely bewildered as to why folks are so befuddled by this," Miller says about the response to his recent heresies. "It's the way I did things in Georgia." That's more or less true. His fellow Democrats just weren't paying attention.

Although Miller is not a widely known national figure, it's hard to overstate his larger-than-life status among Democratic Party regulars. Indeed, in many ways, the story of the Democratic Party's success in the '90s begins with Miller's 1990 gubernatorial campaign. As a four-term lieutenant governor, Miller was the quintessential party hack. But at the urging of his new political consultants, Carville and Paul Begala, Miller cut his ties to the hidebound Democratic Party establishment. Sensing that the days of one-party government in Georgia were coming to an end, Miller steered clear of the usual routes to Democratic victory—the vote-gathering courthouse gangs and state legislators—and ran a sophisticated media campaign that spoke directly to the people. He presented himself as a friend of the working man with a host of new ideas. Primary among them was a state lottery to finance a slate of ambitious education initiatives. The strategy worked, and Miller, relying on a coalition of urban blacks and poor rural whites, won office with 53 percent of the vote.

In many ways, Miller's strategy became the playbook for other Southern Democratic governors, including then-Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, who would later deem Miller a "brilliant, brilliant governor." In 1991, Miller declared, at a meeting of the Southern caucus of the Democratic National Committee, that the party had to "change in fundamental ways" by focusing on economic rather than social issues. Clinton heard him and sought his advice on his embryonic presidential campaign. As Miller later recalled, "I said, 'Well, who you ought to get to help you with that are James Carville and Paul Begala'.... And he said, 'Well, I'm going to Washington, do you think they'll talk with me?' And I said, 'Of course they'll talk with you.'" We know what happened next.

Miller cemented his status as a party hero with his impassioned, populist speech at the 1992 Democratic National Convention at Madison Square Garden. He celebrated Franklin Roosevelt for getting his family through the Depression, blasted George Bush as a "timid man," and declared, in his thick Appalachian twang, "We can't all be born rich and handsome and lucky, and that's why we have a Democratic Party."

AND, LIKE AN image frozen in amber, that is where the Democratic view of Miller remains fixed. But Miller's next big speech—his 1993 State of the State address—would reshape his political identity. Momentarily forgetting his admonition to ignore divisive social issues, Miller used his State of the State address to urge legislators to remove the Confederate emblem from Georgia's state flag. It was a courageous but disastrous stand: The rural whites who had supported Miller in 1990 began to abandon him. Going into his reelection year in 1994, only 28 percent of voters—and half of all Democrats—said they wanted to give Miller a second term.

So Miller changed his political strategy, abandoning his coalition of blacks and poor rural whites in favor of a new alliance between blacks and middle-class, traditionally Republican white suburbanites. In the process, he abandoned his commitment to progressive economics. Miller put on hold his campaign pledge to repeal a highly regressive sales tax on groceries (he would eventually repeal it in his second term) and instead pushed through a less progressive $100 million tax cut for the elderly and families with children. More importantly, he curried favor among middle-class voters with the HOPE scholarship, one of the education initiatives funded by the new state lottery. Beginning in 1993, any Georgia resident whose parents earned $66,000 or less per year and who completed high school with a B average could attend any public college or university in Georgia for

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free. At the beginning of 1994, Miller bumped up the income cap to $100,000, and by the end of the year he removed it altogether. In effect, Miller created an enormous middle-class entitlement on the backs of the poor, who buy a disproportionate share of the state's lottery tickets. That November, while Republicans were routing Democrats throughout the South, Miller eked out a two-point victory, primarily thanks to the new votes he'd picked up in the Atlanta suburbs.

For the next four years, Miller governed with this new electoral base in mind, pushing through another income tax cut, enacting tough new drunk-driving laws, and quoting Teddy Roosevelt instead of FDR. And when Georgia Governor Roy Barnes appointed Miller to the U.S. Senate last July, he hewed to the same political strategy. After all, he still had to run in a special election that November to serve out the remaining four years of Coverdell's term.

Even if Democrats hadn't paid attention to Miller's record as governor, his Senate campaign should have given them some clue he wouldn't toe the party line. When Miller endorsed Republican efforts to abolish the marriage penalty and estate tax (and said he would vote to override a Clinton veto), he proclaimed: "This idea that I'm going to go up there and vote the straight party line or be a lapdog for Bill Clinton—anybody that knows me ought to know that that's not how I'm going to do." Touting HOPE scholarships and pledging to cut taxes, Miller repeatedly declared: "As your senator, I will serve no single party but rather seven and one-half million Georgians."

Indeed, Miller took great pains to distance himself from the Democratic Party. "He basically got word to me during his campaign that I should stay out of Georgia," says Carville. "He didn't want me anywhere near him." The same went for Al Gore. Miller says he supported Gore during the campaign ("I sent the man a thousand-dollar check—the maximum!—early on") and decries any attempt to gauge the level of that support, saying, "We can't be using a rectal thermometer on people." But if you did, you wouldn't get much of a reading: In early August, Miller was conspicuously absent at a Gore-Lieberman rally in downtown Atlanta. The next week, Miller skipped the Democratic convention in favor of an unannounced tour of Georgia's military installations. When, in a debate, Miller's Republican opponent finally forced him to admit he would vote for Gore, Miller quickly explained that he would do so not because he agreed with Gore on the issues but because Gore had been responsive to Georgia's needs during natural disasters and had helped bring the 1996 Olympics to Atlanta. While Gore was trounced in Georgia—losing to George W. Bush by twelve points—Miller defeated his nearest challenger by 18 points.

In Washington, Miller has picked up where he left off in Georgia, pursuing an economic agenda that makes Republicans swoon. Miller is with the Democrats on campaign finance reform and prescription drugs, but on several other important issues he's likely to be a key Bush ally. He attended Bush's December meeting in Austin on education policy, and since then he has indicated he may prefer Bush's education bill to the one proposed by Democratic Senators Joseph Lieberman and Evan Bayh. "I've always opposed vouchers, but the way he [Bush] has got vouchers explained is very interesting," he recently told *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*'s Tom Baxter.

Contrary to current rumor, Miller isn't likely to switch parties. But, given his affection for parts of the Bush agenda, becoming a Republican might be redundant. When asked how he squares his current behavior with his rousing 1992 convention speech, in which he branded the GOP the party of "cynicism and skepticism," he bats down the question: "I don't want to go back to get into that, what I said in speeches." Miller's fellow Democrats on the Hill would be wise to do the same. ■

Is John Breaux all hat and no cattle?

Big Deal

By MICHELLE COTTLE

SOMEWHERE NEAR LAFAYETTE, LOUISIANA

"HEY! LOOK AT THIS—I'm a cocks'n!" giggles Senator John Breaux from the passenger seat of the Chevy Suburban. The Louisiana lawmaker gazes at the document certifying his status as an honorary coxswain of the U.S. Coast Guard and, delighted by the naughtiness of it all, quips, "Does my wife know?" More giggling. Breaux's wife, Lois, sitting placidly in the backseat, doesn't bother to respond. It's early afternoon, and the senator's entourage is speeding down Route 167 toward Abbeville, where Mrs. Breaux is to be the guest of honor at the commissioning of a new Coast Guard cutter. As we roll through the southern parishes, the senator, between cellphone calls, keeps up a running commentary on the scenery around us—swamps, discount stores, restaurants, and most notably... "Hooters!" Again, Breaux is gleefully transported back to the boys' locker room. "Hey! Maybe I should get a job there, since I'm a cocks'n!"

Don't let the adolescent dick jokes fool you. This man is widely expected to be a key power broker in the 107th Congress. A conservative Southern Democrat with friends on both sides of the aisle, Breaux is considered perfectly poised to serve as the go-to guy for a Republican president in need

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of bipartisan support to move his agenda through a 50-50 Senate. Part of the reason is Breaux's politics: His positions—pro-life, pro-gun, pro-big oil—are often closer to Dick Cheney's than to Dick Gephardt's. Another part of it is his Cajun charm, including a willingness to crack off-color jokes whenever the hell he feels like it. But, perhaps even more importantly, Breaux has made a career of positioning himself as the voice of the pragmatic, rational center on a variety of high-profile policy disputes—Medicare, Social Security, tobacco, tax cuts. He is forever railing against ideological rigidity, and he talks of political compromise as if it were a holy sacrament. "I'd always rather have half of something than a hundred percent of nothing" is among his favorite sentiments. In press accounts, Breaux's name is almost invariably followed by mention of "his efforts to reach beyond party lines," "his ability to cut political deals," or how he "has made a career of splitting the difference."

And so, even as the presidential race was being litigated in Florida, the media fawningly solicited Breaux's thoughts on proper political behavior during such raw, partisan times. As the likelihood of a George W. Bush victory grew, the buzz shifted to Breaux's phone chats with W. and his trip to the new president's ranch. When it was all over, the senator's stature was elevated further by Bush's offer to make him energy secretary—and further still by Breaux's magnanimous decision to remain in the Senate. Because of his proven ability to navigate the party divide, Breaux will be "the second most powerful man in Bush's Washington," proclaimed *Newsweek*'s Jonathan Alter, mouthing a common sentiment. Or, as Breaux himself put it in an interview with the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, the evenly split Senate "makes the middle more important, and that's me."

But Breaux's increased profile will bring increased challenges as well. With party loyalty at an unprecedented premium in the Senate, Breaux's penchant for going his own way is apt to provoke anger from fellow Democrats. Under a Clinton presidency, Breaux could push plans unpopular with his party—capital gains tax cuts, increased oil exploration, abortion restrictions—safe in the knowledge that they would be vetoed; under a Republican regime he will not have the same luxury. In fact, Bush's ascendance highlights the fundamental irony of Breaux's career: The senator is a deal-maker whose grand deals never quite work out. When asked to list Breaux's bipartisan accomplishments, supporters almost invariably invoke near misses, such as his work on the (failed) congressional tobacco settlement or his (unsuccessful) effort to craft bipartisan Medicare reform. In short, Breaux owes much of his reputation to dramatic compromises that go nowhere. Which, oddly enough, may be just the way he likes it.

THE WHITE SUBURBAN has barely rolled to a stop in the Wendy's parking lot when Breaux erupts from the passenger seat and trots off in search of the men's room. It's day two of the senator's three-day trip home, and for the past 36 hours a stomach bug has rendered him unable to ingest anything other than Coke. Warm, cold, canned, bottled—the senator is making his way through about a dozen sodas a day, necessitating frequent pit stops. Gastrointestinal distress notwithstanding, Breaux's storied charm has remained on full display. During yesterday's tour of schools in tiny St. Francisville, the senator constantly veered off course to shake hands and swap jokes with any teacher, administrator, or janitor who caught his eye. Now, inside Wendy's, the staff has come out from behind the counter to chat. With a broad grin, Breaux assures the young assistant manager, "We always stop at Wendy's. It's one of our favorite places to eat." As the young man happily heads back toward the kitchen, Breaux turns to his entourage, tilts his head toward the ceiling in mock shame over his outrageous fib, and barks, "Sorry, God." It's classic Breaux—aw-shucks retail politics with a knowing, ironic wink.

"His strength is that he makes everybody feel he has their interests at heart," explains Bernie Pinsonat, a pollster for Southern Media and Opinion Research in Baton Rouge. "Whether John's sitting there talking with hunting enthusiasts or banking enthusiasts from Wall Street, he adapts well to the group he's with." About six feet tall, with brown hair, brown eyes, and front teeth that are just a little too large, Breaux doesn't come across as dauntingly senatorial. His hands are always in his pockets, and he shuffles casually when he walks. Though he has lost much of his Cajun accent, enough remains to tickle the ear, and his voice tends toward the low and lazy—except when delivering his trademark one-liners, which he cracks fast and clipped, almost with a growl. His one-on-one style is intimate and concerned, yet still a little macho—more George W. Bush than Bill Clinton. "He reminds me a lot of George W.," says Bill Goldring, a Louisiana businessman and longtime Breaux chum. "But he's a lot smarter." The senator's Hill colleagues agree. Though not considered an intellectual, Breaux is regarded as bright, politically shrewd, and well-informed about whatever he's working on. "Don't ever underestimate him," says one Democratic Senate staffer. "He might come off a little bit like a Louisiana version of a good ol' boy, but he's a wily legislator."

Breaux's winning personality has helped him serve 28 years on Capitol Hill—14 in the House, 14 and counting in the Senate—without making serious enemies. "He is stunning in his ability to get along with everybody," marvels a member of the Clinton White House. Breaux is the rare politician who can boast close friendships with both Bill Clinton and Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott. And, during Bush I, the Louisiana Democrat was a favorite tennis partner of Poppy's—which may help explain why Bush II has felt so comfortable publicly reaching out to "Johnny Breaux."

His ability to be all things to all people has also made Breaux unbeatable at home: In 1998 he squished his Republican opponent, state Representative Jim Donelon, by 32 percentage points, carrying all but one parish. "In Louisiana, about 30 percent of people are strong Republicans and 30 percent are strong Democrats, and neither of the two groups have any real hard-core negatives toward [Breaux]," says Pinsonat. "And no group in Louisiana has ever energized against him because of any particular position he takes." In fact, people don't really associate Breaux with issues at all, says Pinsonat. "That's the good thing about John.... It's just 'He's a nice guy that cares about me.'"

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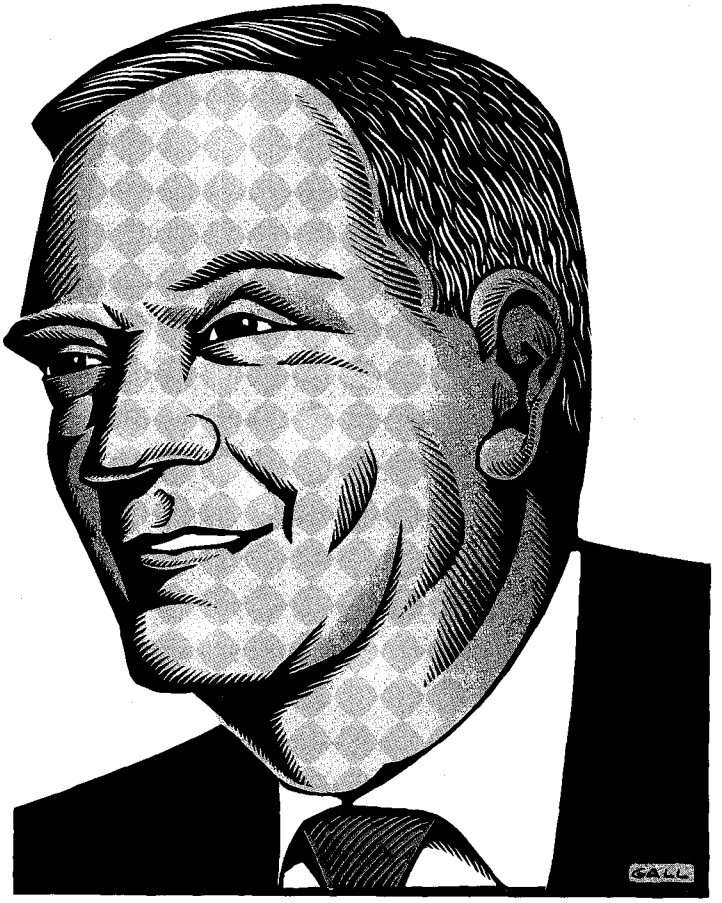
THE ONLY CHILD of an oil-field worker and a dressmaker, Breaux grew up in Crowley, Louisiana, a small town in the southwest Acadiana region of the state. Unlike northern Louisiana, with its generic Bible Belt flavor, the two dozen or so parishes of Acadiana take their cultural and political cues from the French-Catholic Acadians—or "Cajuns"—who settled there. As the *Almanac of American Politics* puts it, Breaux's native region has "a Cajun tradition of respecting the authority of church and state while tolerating a certain amount of *laisser les bons temps rouler* spirit." And, politically speaking, Cajun voters tend to lean more Democratic than their white counterparts north of Baton Rouge.

Breaux honed his political skills at the knee of one of the state's acknowledged masters: former Governor Edwin W. Edwards, who also hailed from Crowley. Breaux graduated from Louisiana State University Law School in 1967 and, after only a year in private practice, headed off to Washington to serve as a legislative aide to then-Representative Edwards. In 1972, when Edwards assumed the Louisiana governorship, he championed Breaux to be his successor in the House, and Breaux has been a fixture on the Hill ever since. Over time, Breaux distanced himself from his former mentor as Edwards—a larger-than-life political character even in a state known for its political characters—became enmeshed in an escalating series of ethically sticky situations that culminated in his conviction last year on numerous corruption-related charges. These days, when recounting Breaux's political background, neither the senator nor his staff even mentions Edwards's name.



CHRIS CALL

Despite having spent the past three decades in Washington, Breaux has remained true to his Louisiana roots. "Our Cajun population is reputed to be fun-loving and party-oriented," says former Breaux challenger Donelon. "They like their food hot and their music loud. And [the senator] is very much in step with that." Every winter, Breaux trades in his pinstripes for a spandex jumpsuit and feather headdress when he and Lois (pronounced "Loyce") play host to some 2,000 Louisianans who flock to D.C. for the Washington Mardi Gras celebration. Held a couple of weeks before actual Mardi Gras, the Washington version consists of four days of food, drinks, bands, floats, dancing, and high-octane schmoozing. Then it's down to New Orleans, where the Breauxs preside over an annual fund-raiser/Mardi Gras bash. "Thank God for Lent," chuckles the senator. "You can't drink for 40 days. It's like checking into the Betty Ford Clinic."

Breaux's upbringing is also evident in his politics. Raised Roman Catholic, the senator is staunchly pro-life—one of only two positions on which he is reputed to be uncompromising. The other is gun control: Like his region, Breaux is pro-gun and pro-hunting. Beyond these issues, Breaux has made a mantra of his penchant for compromise—often in the interest of bringing home the pork. As a senator from a poor state, Breaux is keenly aware that many of his constituents rely on federal dollars to do everything from educating their children to caring for their elderly. On his recent trip home, Breaux spent most of his time meeting with voters to discuss the sorry condition of Louisiana's education and health care systems—but also to remind them that, with the help of his good friend President Clinton, he had just cleared the way for Louisiana to receive an additional $1 billion in Medicaid funding over the next two years.

His affinity for federal largesse notwithstanding, Breaux makes no bones about the fact that Al Gore was too liberal for his taste. "During his speech at the convention," recalls the senator, "I thought, 'Oh my God, it's Walter Mondale.'" Breaux and Bush, by contrast, seem a bipartisan match made in heaven. The new president has already made noises about dusting off Breaux's Medicare plan. And, just before Inauguration Day, Breaux penned an op-ed for *The Wall Street Journal* supporting Bush's proposal to open up the Alaskan wilderness to oil drilling. "John, very much so, is conservative," says Boysie Bollinger, head of Bollinger Shipyards and one of Breaux's many GOP supporters. Bollinger says his occasional disagreements with Breaux "are more on party-line issues than on philosophy issues. When they rein in the party-line votes, he generally sticks with the Democrats." But, as far as political philosophy goes, Breaux would make a fantastic Republican, insists Bollinger, who admits that on several occasions he has tried to bring the senator over to his team.

Democrats, meanwhile, acknowledge that Breaux is something of a headache for their caucus. "On the floor, you're always casting one eye warily over toward Breaux to see what he's up to," says one aide. "Democratic staffers are always looking over there to see when he's going to walk through the Republican cloakroom to go try and cut a deal." On Medicare

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reform in particular—Breaux's pet project since he chaired Clinton's commission on the issue in 1998—the Louisiana deal-maker exasperates his colleagues. (Breaux favors a managed competition system along the lines of the Federal Employees Health Benefits Plan.) "He and Bob Kerrey call themselves the pain caucus," says a Democratic aide, clearly unimpressed. "It's a point of pride—the point being that he's willing to inflict pain on federal entitlement recipients. It's a pride in being willing to make tough choices, with the implication being that other people are not as courageous."

And it's not just entitlement reform—Breaux has been proudly straying from the party line since his days in the House. In 1981, he struck a deal with the Reagan administration, voting for cuts in social spending in exchange for extended subsidies for Louisiana sugar producers. Asked about the vote, he quipped that his vote was not for sale, "but it is available for rent." Breaux wasn't the first pol to crack this particular joke, but the quote seemed so apt that it stuck. Twenty years later, Democratic staffers still bring it up when discussing Breaux's eagerness to barter with Republicans. The senator is unapologetic. It's not that he doesn't have any political principles, Breaux explains. "It's that one principle I have is making government work."

BUT THE REAL problem with Breaux is not that he's willing to jettison Democratic priorities to achieve pragmatic, bipartisan reforms—it's that the pragmatic, bipartisan reforms he champions never seem to go anywhere. Ask the senator's supporters to name a successful compromise Breaux has brokered and they're usually stumped. "[I] probably could if you hadn't asked me," says Jim Brady, a Louisiana judge and longtime Breaux pal, "but right now I can't." Bob Mann, Breaux's state director, is similarly at a loss: "Nothing really pops to mind, except to say that on just about every piece of legislation that passes his way, Breaux always tries to look for a way to put his imprint on it." Breaux supporter John Georges cites the senator's role in the heated Hill debate over tobacco legislation: "His own mother died of cancer, but he didn't let that get in the way of being fair to constituents." Of course, as Georges acknowledges, the deal ultimately "blew up in Congress."

Yet, no matter how often his deals crumble, Breaux still wins points for preaching the gospel of moderation. The senator's Medicare commission, for example, failed even to send a recommendation to Congress—but the experience only increased his reasonable-centrist cachet. Stuart Altman, a Brandeis University professor who served on the commission and ultimately voted against Breaux's reform plan, was nonetheless impressed with the senator's handling of the feuding reformers. "He was—and I say this in the best sense of the word—a true Southern gentleman," says Altman. "He never got flustered. Things got pretty acrimonious at times—I was surprised how acrimonious—but he was very balanced and gave everyone their due." And, when the commission fell one vote short of the supermajority needed to make a recommendation, Breaux loudly blamed the failure on other politicians' preference for playing politics. "There are clearly those who don't want to do anything on this, and use this as a political issue," he groused at the time.

The Medicare commission, in fact, fit a recurring Breaux pattern. He sees a high-profile, polarizing issue (Medicare, Social Security, tobacco, tax cuts), wades into the fray with a split-the-difference solution, and promptly begins decrying the ideologues, left and right, for their failure to compromise. So it was in 1999, when Breaux pushed a compromise tax-cut plan: "The parties have increasingly taken the position that it's my way or no way—so what we end up with is no way." And during the 1998 tobacco debate: "[W]e are faced with getting nothing because we tried to get too much, and that is indeed tragic." The more unlikely a compromise is, the more fiercely Breaux demands it.

After a while, you begin to wonder if this pattern is more than pure coincidence. In many ways, the Louisiana centrist is better served by having his high-profile crusades fail than by having them succeed. When negotiations break down, the senator gets the credit for taking "gutsy" policy stands—but none of the blame for whatever sacrifices a successful reform might entail. After all, the arguments into which Breaux injects himself are contentious for a reason: Any change in policy will result in clear winners and losers, and the losers will be decidedly unhappy.

Whether Breaux can maintain his bipartisan juggling act now that Republicans control the White House as well as the Senate remains to be seen. Without the backstop of a Clinton veto, some of Breaux's center-right proposals may actually find their way into law. And, if they do, even Breaux's Cajun charm may not be enough to placate his fellow Democrats—not to mention voters angry about, say, changes in their Medicare coverage. During the tobacco debate, for instance, Breaux argued against a $1.50-per-pack tax increase on cigarettes, insisting it would hurt poor folks (of which Louisiana has many). But Breaux's lower-income constituents would have been almost as unhappy with his support of the (compromise) $1.10 tax increase—as would Louisiana's food and tobacco wholesalers, who warned that such a hike would create a black market for cigarettes that would devastate their businesses.

THE SENATOR'S FINAL stop on Tuesday is a nursing home in Hammond. Upon arrival, his entourage is herded toward a common room, where dozens of seniors have assembled to listen to a local bluegrass band. Breaux kisses a few cheeks, barks a few jokes, and requests a chorus of "You Are My Sunshine." Then he's off patrolling the halls, charming staffers and residents alike. As Breaux emerges from a tour of the Alzheimer's unit, a frail gentleman in a wheelchair stops the senator and praises him for fighting the good fight for reasoned centrism. The man used to be a Democrat, he tells Breaux, until he got fed up with the party. But then he got sick of the Republicans, too. "Now," he grins, "I'm a middle-roader, and I like that you're a middle-roader too." Breaux thanks the man for his kind words, then ducks over my way. You know what they say, the senator growls: "If you're gonna be in the middle of the road, you're gonna get run over." It's unclear whether he means it as a joke or a prediction. ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Within the Past Within

In 1984 Ingmar Bergman wrote and directed *After the Rehearsal*, which took place on the stage of a theater. There were only three speaking characters: a theater director, Bergman given another name and played by Erland Josephson who was then sixty-one; an eighteen-year-old actress; and her mother, also an actress, who was a revenant—she had died some years earlier. Against the soft tinklings of suggestion in this piece, which was not as much a drama as a meditation, the principal theme was the interweaving of theater mystique and the mysteries of sex. Embracing it all was the fluidity of time: at moments two of the characters were glimpsed as children. The play that was in rehearsal at this theater was Strindberg's *A Dream Play*, and Bergman's screenplay is a tiny refraction of that giant work. At one point, the theater director, whose life is in entropy, says about encroaching age: "You lean forward and your head is right inside another reality. The dead are not dead, the living seem like ghosts."

Bergman is still leaning forward. He has written **Faithless** (Samuel Goldwyn) about a theater director, again played by Josephson, who this time is actually called Bergman. (Hoping to avoid confusion, I'll use "Bergman" to denote the character that Josephson plays.) "Bergman," now living alone on the island of Fårö, summons, out of the other reality, three people, a woman and her husband and her lover, and hears once again their story which he already knows. "Hears" is the operative word: few leading characters have ever *listened* more than "Bergman" does. He has very little dialogue.

Faithless was directed by Liv Ullmann, whose acting was brought to the world's grateful notice by Bergman in 1965—in *Persona*, much of which was shot on this very island—and who now concentrates on directing. She has made four features, one of them from a Bergman screenplay, *Private Confessions*, a lovely film about the author's parents. Of this latest work Ullmann says that "it is based on a real event in Ingmar Bergman's life. He tried to write about this for many years," but was able to do it only when he found the right actress for the woman. As for the factuality, I can't believe that it is exceptional for Bergman: surely a good deal of his work was based on experience. Besides, for those "many years" he had with him such superb actresses as Harriet Andersson, Bibi Andersson, and Ullmann herself so he certainly wasn't lacking for evocation. I would venture that, with *Faithless*, Bergman simply wanted to have one more try at a subject that, as happens with many great dramatists, kept drawing him on and on. For Bergman that subject was Eros, erotic conflagration and ashes and agony in all possible prisms of the mind and soul—the sheer possibility and impossibility for men and women to live together. Such an artist as Bergman works with the skeptical hope that he is getting closer to understanding. The closure never happens, of course; but the maze-wanderings of a major artist are our reward.

These visitors to "Bergman" tell us of their relationships, the sudden surprises of feeling, the unforeseen consequences, the torments, the hastily invoked braveries. Marianne is an actress, her husband Markus is a conductor, and they have a young daughter, Isabelle. The other man is David, a writer-director. They reenact their story which, as we learn, was long ago finished: "Bergman" is summoning it again almost as he might have put on a tape of a film. At the beginning, the Marianne-Markus marriage seems secure: she even scoffs at a suggestion that she finds David attractive. Yet very soon afterward she and David become lovers. Possibly the point of this quick contradiction is the ease with which sureness in such matters can crumble.

The triangular story writhes on, in one of their homes or another and with a sequence in Paris, always braided with returns to "Bergman" on the island. In the course of Marianne's affair with David, temperature rises and falls, irritations and reconciliations occur, discoveries by the lovers and by Markus alter the chemistry. All three of them, as with many characters in Bergman's films, are articulate in self-analysis. They keep prying open secret places in themselves, especially Marianne, talking about them to "Bergman" as if his listening were itself a clarification, even an absolution. (The welfare of the child Isabelle is always a concern, though never a deterrent to Eros. Ullmann said in an interview that she added the child to Bergman's script. The Isabelle sequences are the only moments when the picture comes near to sentimentality. Compare the children in *After the Rehearsal*.)

As the title tells us, the film coils around the subject of truth—in love and sex. After the promises are given, human experience in marriage or in any union intended to be permanent ranges from absolute fidelity to a promiscuity beyond the mediation of "open" marriage. The oddity is that there need be no congruency between the observance of vows made in love and other vows. The unfaithful husband or wife can be as trustworthy in every other aspect of life—business, friendship, whatever—as the faithful one. Bergman, here as always, is concerned with men and women who think they know their minds in sexual matters and discover how changes in emotional landscape can affect them. Self-justification is part of the story, of course, but certainly not all. Once again Bergman's characters are as much interested in honesty as in sex: they are just trying to find out how to make the two compatible.

But the trouble with *Faithless* is precisely that last sentence, that familiarity. This new screenplay accomplishes less than some previous Bergman works in the same region—*Winter Light*, *The Passion of Anna*, *Scenes from a Marriage*. Any viewer who has seen these films, as well as others of Bergman, may feel as I did after a while: we know what is coming—in general if not in detail. In the past Bergman has followed his master Strindberg into all the dangerous adventures of man-and-woman that he could plumb and, in doing so, has enriched us. (*A Dream Play* figures again in *Faithless*.) But this new film adds little to what he has given us already. And he takes considerable time to confirm this. Bergman's best films average about 90 minutes in length: Faithless runs 155 minutes.

It is also hard to understand his wonder at the being and the performance of Lena Endre, the Marianne. She is a completely competent actress, clearly skilled and intelligent; but her personality is somewhat bland, and she has very little sexual aura. (Compare her with the woman who was directing her.) Thomas Hanzon is quite adequate as Markus, but Krister Henriksson, as David, has a

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somewhat doughy face and a remote voice. His moments of outburst seem almost to come from another person. His character has to be taken on trust: we have to believe what others say about him because Henriksson doesn't provide it. The "Bergman," Erland Josephson, hardly needs comment. Josephson has one of those faces that speak when silent and a presence that brings with it a life that has been lived.

One important component of *After the Rehearsal* was not available for this later sibling piece: the theater. The air of the stage, which (as the earlier screenplay says) is crowded with spent emotions for those who like to fantasize thus, seeps into *After the Rehearsal*. Admittedly, for Bergman familiars, his Fårö cottage and the vistas of that gray beach, locales by now of our own treasured experience, almost compensate for the lack, but not quite; in *Faithless* the theater is much discussed, but the mystical-sentimental ambiance of the stage is out of reach.

Jörgen Persson's cinematography is wonderfully comprehending, which one would expect of the man who shot *Pelle the Conqueror*. Ullmann as director is both blessed and burdened by doing a Bergman screenplay in a Bergman setting—indeed, the very setting where, in *Persona*, she entered whatever immortality a film can afford. She has an eye for framing that helps quietly to dramatize. She has learned from Bergman how to make scenes between two people feel seamless even when she cuts from one person to the other. With her editor, Sylvia Ingemarsson, she has woven boding atmosphere right into the texture of sequence after sequence. Ullmann's burden of course is in the blessing itself: How can her directing possibly be judged on its own apart from Bergman? But it is a burden that is a blessing to bear.

In any case, *Faithless* and her earlier film written by Bergman, *Private Confessions*, constitute a phenomenon. A great writer-director may be waning, but an artist whom he fostered is a keeper of the flame. ■

Robert Brustein on Theater

On the Cape Town

SOUTH AFRICA IS a paradise of great unspoiled beauty, but like all Edens it has a serpent in the garden. Before 1994, the snake was called apartheid. After apartheid, it took the form of a growing crime rate and a galloping incidence of AIDS, exacerbated by President Thabo Mbeki's preposterous theories about HIV. In recent years, the government has made some advances in housing and education; but partly to attract foreign investment, partly to discourage white flight, the African National Congress (ANC) has not fulfilled its promise to improve the general standard of living. Instead, a lot of government resources, those not being drained by corrupt government officials, have gone into encouraging black corporate capitalism. Still, South Africans of all colors are among the world's sweetest, mildest people, and the country remains an extremely desirable place to live.

Yet economic inequality remains a grinding fact in South Africa, as symbolized by the shantytowns that are slowly edging in on the luxury houses; and poverty usually breeds violent crime. As a result, the white population increasingly takes refuge from rape, theft, and murder inside heavily gated communities. Every fifth car on the road seems to be marked "Armed Reponse"—the vehicles of a private police force that may represent the one area in South Africa where employment is on the rise.

The ANC failed to capture the Western Cape province, whose capital is the glistening beach city of Cape Town, in the last elections. The ruling party did not win a majority there because it couldn't manage to get out the black vote, and because the "coloreds" (a community of mixed-race descent, usually white Afrikaners and brown-skinned Hottentots) traditionally vote for white candidates. Tony Leon's Democratic Party (DP) managed to recapture that majority by forming what some consider a devil's bargain with its former enemies, the Nationalist Party (Nats), in a loose federation called the Democratic Alliance (DA). Since the Nats were once the party of apartheid, political blocs on the Cape would now seem to be forming along racial lines rather than ideological lines.

Racialism, in fact, has become the predominant issue in the country, not only in politics but also in culture. The ANC has drastically reduced arts spending, which is now down from ten percent of an institution's budget to about four percent. This may seem munificent by American standards, but the money is largely restricted to non-white groups. Government subsidy for European cultural expressions no longer exists. Whatever the reasons for this, whether to help promote an indigenous African culture or to punish those who voted against the ANC, in Cape Town the policy has already resulted in the loss of the city's opera company, ballet company, and symphony orchestra.

The theater still survives after a fashion, partly because it can still draw on private funding. And just as it was the theater that previously confronted apartheid in plays such as those of Athol Fugard, so it is the theater that today is exploring South Africa's complicated racial issues in an honest manner. It is also there that a genuine multiculturalism is beginning to evolve, if the productions that I saw are at all typical. At the huge Nico Theater in Cape Town, where black people were once prohibited from appearing on the stage or sitting in the audience, many presentations are European plays or operas adapted to accommodate black performers. A few years ago I saw an excellent all-black production of *La Bohème* at the Nico, set in Soweto. This season I witnessed a performance of the Oscar Hammerstein musical *Carmen Jones*, featuring black and colored singers, along with some white dancers performing in dark makeup!

Carmen Jones is *Carmen* transferred to a black army base in the United States during World War II. Instead of making cigarettes, Carmen works in a parachute factory; her lover, Don Jose, has turned into a sergeant in the U.S. Army named Joe; and the matador Escamillo has experienced a sea change into Husky Miller, a heavyweight boxing champion. Hammerstein left Bizet's music pretty much intact, but he treated the Mérimée book a lot like Peter Sellars was later to treat the

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libretti of Handel and Mozart operas: as pretexts for modern settings and contemporary references designed to make the operas more audience-friendly.

Although this production of *Carmen Jones* imported a couple of singers from the States to play the leads, most of the cast had broad Capetonian accents that made the American setting seem inauthentic. I happened to see this show on Broadway when I was a kid, along with a number of other European works then being adapted for black casts. (They included *The Hot Mikado*, *The Swing Mikado*, and *Swinging the Dream*.) It worked well then, but in Cape Town it seemed like a period piece. One of the paradoxes of theatrical "updatings" is how quickly they date. This *Carmen Jones* required a much fresher imagination in order to keep the piece from going stale.

The Baxter Theater Centre is one of the busiest hubs in South Africa for dramatic work. Supported by the University of Cape Town, this well-equipped complex contains three flexible stages of various sizes. All the theaters were filled, during my visit, with various projects, one of them Marc Lottering's *From the Cape Flats With Love*, a satire on racial attitudes recently cited by *The New York Times* in an article on race-based South African humorists. The other two shows in the building were *The Kat and the Kings* and *Glass Roots*, both of them comically preoccupied as well with South African racial divisions.

David Kramer and Taliep Petersen's *The Kat and the Kings* is a piece that traveled well to every city (including London, where it won an Olivier Award) except New York. There it ran into a sour press, though it still managed to eke out a six-month run. I probably would have panned the show, too, had I seen it on Broadway. It is highly derivative of *Grease*, both in its 1950s rock-and-roll score and its Three Stooges brand of comedy. But watching it with a South African audience was a real lesson in how your environment can influence your feelings about a theater piece.

The musical is set in the 1950s in District Six, a multicultural, largely colored area of Cape Town, later bulldozed to the ground in 1966 by the apartheid regime. *The Kat and the Kings* is a nostalgic tribute to that area during a time when Elvis Presley, Little Richard, and Chuck Berry were galvanizing the youth of South Africa. It is a good-natured story, told from the perspective of an aging shoeshine man named Kat Diamond, about the decade when he and four other coloreds formed a rock-and-roll band that achieved a certain degree of celebrity, a condition signified by their changing from work clothes into brightly-colored polyester jackets. Although allowed to play in white hotels, they are forced to sleep in the servant quarters and work as bellboys during the day. "The government decided where we could eat, drink, sleep," Kat ruefully remembers, "who we could marry." The white announcer who introduces their act makes jokes about their criminal propensities: "If they weren't here, they'd probably be breaking into your car, so give them your handbag ... uh, I mean a big hand."

The various members of the group are nicely delineated, and all of the performers (particularly Terry Hector as Kat, Erica Charles as Lucy, and Alistair Izobell as Magoo) have an infectious energy that reaches to the back of the house. Kramer's staging ideas are always inventive, and Petersen's musical arrangements, though familiar enough, are dynamic and effective. *The Kat and the Kings* ends with the breakup of the band, as District Six is turned into a whites-only area (ironically, no whites will ever live there), and apartheid drives three of the singers into exile in Toronto. Indeed, the theme of homelessness, banishment, and longing for a lost Eden creates a more compelling melody in this show than all the Western rock-and-roll. And the evening ends with a rousing Zulu dance that brings the entire audience to its feet, roaring and waving. Myself included.

Fiona Coyne's *Glass Roots* is a more sophisticated variation on the same theme, which is the uneasy yet inescapable relationship among the races in the "new" (or, as one character amends it, "newish") South Africa. "On the surface," Coyne tells us in a program note, "we're pretending to get on with one another ... but we know that below ground things are different." She actually manages to explore these differences through a relatively conventional mother-in-law play on the order of *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*.

Jocelyn (Jenny Stead) is a "creative" advertising person seeking the "quintessential South African" for a beer commercial. She thinks that she has found her in a middle-aged colored woman named Verity (Gail Reagon) who votes for the Nats. Since Jocelyn's business partner is a black man named Vuyo (Wiseman Sithole), who also happens to be attracted to her, the play is perfectly set up for three-way interracial tensions when Jocelyn's mother, Mona, moves from Johannesburg to live with her in Cape Town.

Deliciously played by Diane Wilson in an alcoholic daze that recalls Elaine Stritch groping around the stage in *A Delicate Balance*, Mona is continuously dousing herself with belts from portable vodka bottles. She is the "previously advantaged" type of person who may vote Liberal but who is secretly grateful to the Nats for having kept the blacks in their place—in short, a combination of Auntie Mame and Archie Bunker. (The colored Verity, just as suspicious of blacks as Mona, feels none of her liberal guilt: "It's a white thing, my sister.") Like Archie Bunker, Mona can get off bigoted nonsequiturs with an innocence that almost takes away their sting, especially since her prejudices extend to just about everybody, regardless of race. For Mona, the whole country has gone to the dogs. But then, so has every country. Like most South Africans, she thinks that racism is far worse overseas than in her own backyard.

When she comes upon Vuyo, fresh from a sexual encounter with her daughter ("My God but it is hot, eh?" is the way she rationalizes his nakedness), she tells him: "I was going to ask Jocelyn if I could move in with her but you beat me to it." But Vuyo is not the only habit of Jocelyn that Mona disapproves of. Another is her cocaine addiction. And in the best-written scene in the play, mother and daughter go after each other with a ferocity that leaves them both spent. Calling her "a nasty piece of work ... not what I hoped for," Mona tells Jocelyn that no self-respecting white boy would live with her. She also reveals that she has not retired from her job in Johannesburg, she has been fired—more accurately, "retrenched," the word used when black workers take over positions previously held by whites.

The resolution is a more understanding relationship between daughter and mother, just as the friendship between Verity and Mona symbolizes a new harmony between coloreds and Europeans, and the relationship between Vuyo and Jocelyn suggests closure of the tensions between black and white. As Vuyo says, "They can't go on blaming apartheid all the time. The past is the past." All this may be wishful thinking. Despite its acerbic edge, *Glass Roots* is essentially a light comedy that does not aspire much above its genre. But the unusual thing about the play, indeed about so much South African theater these days, is the way it manages to weave in, along with plot turns and character issues, candid expressions of fear and suspicion—on the part of blacks, whites, and coloreds alike—regarding the Other. This sometimes brutally honest examination of prejudice, which still eludes our own theater at the present time, is the single best hope for reconciliation in a racially divided land. It sure beats the way we Americans repeatedly, and quite futilely, recycle black recriminations and white guilt. ■

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Real wounds, unreal wounds.

The Romance of Exile

By Ian Buruma

I.

Exile is in fashion. Once it was consumption—pale, sunken cheeks, spatters of blood on a white linen handkerchief, and so on—that suggested an artistic sensibility and a poetic soul. Now it is exile that evokes the sensitive intellectual, the critical spirit operating alone on the margins of society, a traveler, rootless and yet at home in every metropolis, a tireless wanderer from academic conference to academic conference, a thinker in several languages, an eloquent advocate for ethnic and sexual minorities—in short, a romantic outsider living on the edge of the bourgeois world.

This may sound frivolous. For exile is surely no fun. There is nothing glamorous about the poor, shivering Tamil, sleeping on a cold plastic bench at the Frankfurt railway station; or the Iraqi, fleeing from Saddam's butchers, afraid of walking the streets of Dover, lest he be attacked by British skinheads; or the young woman from Eritrea, standing along a minor road to Milan, picking up truck drivers so that she can feed her baby. These are not fashionable figures, they are genuine outcasts; and they have nothing in common with the multicultural intellectuals whom we honor as the poets of postcolonial discourse.

I have in front of me an interesting little book called *Letters of Transit: Reflections on Exile, Identity, Language and Loss*. It is a collection of lectures given at the New York Public Library by five well-known writers "in exile." Edward Said is introduced as a Palestinian in exile, Eva Hoffman as a Pole in exile, Bharati Mukherjee as a Bengali in exile, Charles Simic as a Yugoslav in exile, and André Aciman, the editor of the book, as an exile from Alexandria. The lectures are, on the whole, unexceptionable. The curious thing is that, of the five witnesses to exile, only two were forced to leave their country of origin: Aciman, whose family was kicked out of Egypt, and Simic, whose parents could not live under communism. Said, who grew up in Cairo, was sent to a private boarding school in the United States, not as a consequence of any force majeure, but because his father, an American citizen, believed that an American education offered better prospects for a bright young man. He was quite right, of course; and Said repaid his father's confidence by having a very successful American career. Bharati Mukherjee, born into a wealthy Calcutta family, married a Canadian writer, moved to North America, and has no desire to return to India, except, as she puts it, for "relaxed vacations."

Why, then, this invocation of "exile"? Why the conscious identification with banishment, with the outcasts of the world? In her measured contribution, Eva Hoffman comes up with a plausible explanation. Exile, in her view, "involves dislocation, disorientation, self-division. But today, at least within the framework of postmodern theory, we have come to value exactly those qualities of experience that exile demands—uncertainty, displacement, the fragmented identity. Within this conceptual framework, exile becomes, well, sexy, glamorous, interesting." In literary and academic circles, then, exile has acquired a theoretical quality, something far removed from those cold plastic benches at Frankfurt station, the skinheads of Dover, or the truck drivers stopping for quick relief along the B-routes to Milan.

What we have here, in other words, is exile as metaphor, to use Said's phrase: exile as the typical condition of the modern intellectual—indeed, as the only condition that should command our respect. This is not an original thesis. Said's hero, the German philosopher Theodor Adorno, who was for a time a real exile, claimed that a sense of alienation, of not feeling at home even in your own home, was the only correct moral attitude for an intellectual to adopt. Adorno was in this respect heir to a German romantic tradition, according to which intellectuals form a secular clerisy guarding the moral and intellectual health of the nation. (Günter Grass is an example of a modern writer who still takes this line.)

Exile as metaphor is not a new idea, either. In the Jewish tradition, for example, a symbolic meaning has been attached to exile for a very long time. The

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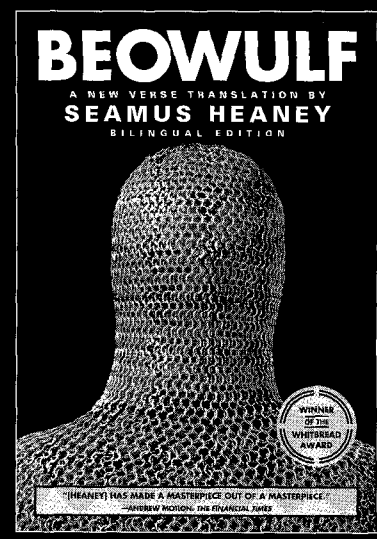
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last words of the Passover seder, "Next year in Jerusalem," express a pious wish that is, for most of those who voice it, an abstraction. For Orthodox Jews, it is only time to return to Jerusalem once the Messiah has come and the temple has been restored to its former glory. Jerusalem, in this sense, is less a real place than a religious vision. It would indeed be a form of blasphemy, for most of the Orthodox tradition, to turn the vision into a political reality. Thus the idea of doing just that—of returning the Jews to their ancient land and making Israel again into the homeland of the Jews—had to be a secular enterprise, started by non-Orthodox, often socialist Jews. Theodor Herzl was a Viennese intellectual who had no time for religious metaphors. He had purely practical reasons for liberating Jews from exile: millions lived under the constant threat of poverty and violence.

THE ISRAELI WRITER A.B. Yehoshua calls Jewish exile, the *golah*, a "neurotic condition." It is neurotic to express a longing for something without actually wishing to attain it. In Yehoshua's view, the longing to return to Jerusalem is no more than a neurotic form of nostalgia—a not uncommon condition, by the way, among certain literary exiles, too. But Yehoshua goes further, and touches on the contemporary romance of exile: he thinks that Jews are victims of their own delusion of having been chosen by God. For the idea of Jewish exceptionalism is hard to maintain at home, in a largely Jewish nation, with its own government, army, political parties, showbiz celebrities, scandals, gangsters, movie stars, and the rest. The self-flattering as well as fatal notion of being chosen, of being different from the others, is easier to maintain in exile, where one's special status can be confirmed almost daily by instances, imagined or real, of discrimination. The Holocaust came as the final proof that this was not a sensible recipe for a quiet life. Yehoshua is a Zionist, in the secular tradition of Herzl, because he wants Jews to live as a normal people, neither exiled nor persecuted nor privileged by God.

The choice to live in a metaphorical exile is in fact already a form of privilege, something only people who face no real danger can afford. Herzl, who felt at ease with the higher goyim of Europe, understood this perfectly well. The return to the holy land was not to help himself, but to help other Jews who were not in a position to enjoy their special status as the chosen ones. But Herzl, so far as I know, had the honesty never to use the word "exile" to describe his own condition.

II.

EXILE AS A metaphor did not begin with the Jewish diaspora. The first story of exile in our tradition is the story of Adam and Eve. No matter how we interpret the story of their expulsion from the Garden of Eden—original sin or not—we may be certain of one thing: there is no way back to paradise. After that fatal bite of the apple, the return to pure innocence was cut off forever. The exile of Adam and Eve is the mark of maturity, the consequence of growing up. An adult can only recall the state of childlike innocence in his imagination; and from this kind of exile a great deal of literature has emerged. The sign of this literature is the melancholy knowledge that we can never return to Eden, however much we stuff ourselves with our particular madeleines.

The landscape of Eden, shown in countless paintings and prints, is a luxuriant, watery place crawling with life, like a tropical jungle, filled with lakes and green forests, insects, birds, and other animals. Places of exile in literature, from the Bible to Ovid's *Tristia* and the Chinese poets, are empty, barren, lifeless, hot and dry, or swept by icy winds: exile as a kind of death. Banished by his emperor to a backwater on the Black Sea, Ovid writes about his "lonely exile, stretching out in time as bleak as the terrain itself, as vast, as empty..." And Tomis, his place of exile, is described as "that huddle of mean hovels in the chill wind that blows off the dark Euxine..." The Roman hedonist, banished for writing his erotic poems (this, at any rate, was the official explanation), dies "of thirst for the liquid flow of good talk and laughter." Liquidity is clearly important (and a common symbol of matriarchy).

There is a rich literature of empire written by people, often English or Dutch, who were born in tropical colonies and later sent to homelands that they had never seen. Their earliest memories evoke a tropical landscape, full of lakes, rivers, and lush gardens, where they roam as nature's children, nurtured by local nannies. To be banished from this paradise and sent to school "back home" was a great shock, but there is no way back to the tropical Eden of a colonial childhood. For that place no longer exists, metaphorically or in actual fact. The colonies must indeed have been like paradise for many northern European children. Innocence was given an Arcadian landscape and climate. Malay, or Urdu, spoken by the local nannies, was the language of childhood purity. The landscape of the adult world of good and evil, by contrast, was northern, cold and bleak; and English or Dutch were the harsh languages of fathers and tyrannical boarding schools.

This is a caricature, to be sure. And it is one that leaves out all the dark aspects of colonialism. But it is a caricature that, through peculiar historical circumstances, gives shape to something that all of us can feel, even if we never left home. The transition from childhood innocence, and the security of the maternal embrace, to the hard world of maturity, can indeed seem like a form of exile for most of us. In his memoir *Out of Time*, Edward Said describes his arrival from Cairo in 1951, to go to school in America. The worst wrench was to leave his mother, who never ceased to remind her son how "unnatural" it was to be living apart. He can still feel the loss today, "the sense that I'd rather be somewhere else—defined as closer to her, authorized by her, enveloped in her special maternal love, infinitely forgiving, sacrificing, giving—because being *here* was not being where I/we had wanted to be, *here* being defined as a place of exile..."

We all know the feeling, the Wordsworthian feeling, even though we may not express it quite so tearfully. Ovid certainly felt it, but he recognized also the need to overcome it: "There's no end to the business of learning how not to be a child, tired, hungry, cold, and calling for his mama. Not to call... that is the beginning of courage." Exile from Eden is simply a part of life. In this sense, it is common to all of us, and so it cannot be adequately described as an experience of victimization. Some exiles from the bliss of childhood never look back; some never get over it, and look for the maternal embrace in the beds of many women; some turn it into art. This explains the universal fascination with exile in literature. The voice of Ovid, Li Po, and Joseph Roth appeal to us not least because their banishments, which were not imaginary, also contained a deeper, metaphorical meaning.

III.

THERE ARE DIFFERENT circumstances in which the childhood Edens cease to exist. A society, a culture, even a people can disappear. Czeslaw Milosz, born as a Pole in Lithuania, has described what it is like to look back now, as an American in California, to his youth in Vilna. He still writes in Polish about people and ways of life that are no longer there. All things change everywhere, of course; but some places are more stable than others. In the case of Milosz, and also of Isaac Bashevis Singer, the worlds that they describe exist only in their books.

The same was true for Joseph Roth, one of my favorite writers. He lived in exile twice over, for he grew up in the Austro-Hungarian empire of Franz-Joseph, which

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ceased to exist in 1918, and died as an exile in Paris in 1939, one year after Austria was swallowed up by Hitler's Third Reich. His most gripping novels, *The Radetzky March* (1932) and its sequel *The Emperor's Tomb* (1938), are together a requiem for the Hapsburg empire, which wrapped the minorities in its royal embrace. Both novels trace the fortunes of the Trotta family, whose original home was in the border regions, where Roth himself was born. At the Battle of Solferino in 1859, grandfather Trotta saved his emperor's life by shielding him from a bullet. He received a fine title for his heroism. But after that things begin to slide for the Trottas, and for the empire too. Carl Joseph, the grandson of the hero of Solferino, dies amidst the general slaughter of World War I. The emperor dies in that same year, and two years later so does the empire.

Roth, who spent much of the 1930s in exile, working and drinking in cafés and hotels, wrote that his "strongest experience was the war and the fall of my fatherland, the *only one I ever had*: the Austro-Hungarian monarchy." He was banished from an empire that continued to exist only in his imagination. But there is another form of banishment, which snuffs out the possibility of return to the old country, but not because the place of origin has ceased to exist. Perhaps this is the hardest kind to bear. After a life in exile, it is often too late to go back. Too much has happened while you were away. You have become a stranger. The country that you remember is no longer the country that you left.

This feeling of loss, the sense that it is too late, that you have lost your place, was beautifully expressed more than two thousand years ago by Chinese poets. One example should be enough to show that emotions of this kind have no borders. It was written by Li Ling, who lived in exile in the bleak desert north of the Great Wall. His only Chinese companion in the land of the Huns was a friend samed Su Wu. After nineteen years, Su was told he could return to the hearth of Chinese civilization. Li Ling decided not to go with him. Instead he began to dance in the wilderness and to sing a song:

> I came ten thousand leagues
> Across sandy deserts
> In the service of my Prince
> To break the Hun tribes.
> My way was blocked and barred,
> My arrows and sword broken.
> My armies had faded away,
> My reputation had gone.
> My old mother is long dead. Although I
> want to requite my Prince
> How can I return?

ULYSSES, ONE OF the most remarkable exiles in Western literature, was not really banished, in the sense that he was driven from his home; but his return from Troy was blocked for ten years, and so he was an exile after all. Ulysses pined for Ithaca, the land of his ancestors, where his house was, and his family, and his wife Penelope. He was lord of Ithaca: that was his place in the order of things. A man who has lost his house, his wife, or his position is not a proper man, but a beggar, a vagabond, half dead in the land of the living. A vagabond is sterile; he does not produce a family; he leaves nothing behind; his life has no meaning. Only at home, with a solid reputation, can a man lead an honorable life. The *Odyssey* is the story of a man who must regain his position in the order of things. Some gods, especially Athena, are of help to him; others, notably Poseidon, the god of the oceans, try to hinder him in his task.

Like those Teutonic knights in search of some holy grail or other, Ulysses is tested before he can return to his family. It is as though time is arrested during his trials, as if the natural life cycle of the hero is frozen. In the land of Circe, where Ulysses sleeps with the dangerous and seductive goddess, and his men spend their time feasting, it is hard to measure time in days and nights. It feels like a timeless existence, and like a baby in the mother's womb, the hero is in the power of his woman—a power that he has to overcome in order to live.

Yet the *Odyssey* is not only about the trials of Ulysses. Equally important is the story of Penelope, who has to protect the status quo in Ithaca, and fend off the advances of her husband's rivals. Without her fidelity, the hero's attempts to regain his honor and position would come to nothing. Homer, in other words, was as sensitive as the ancient Chinese poet to the problems of living abroad for too long. Things change in your absence. How do you find your way back? How do you find yourself again?

When Ulysses finally wakes up on the beach of his native Ithaca, he does not recognize where he is at first. "Man of misery, whose land have I lit on now? What are they here—violent, savage, lawless? Or friendly to strangers, god-fearing men?" Nor can the hero simply turn up at his old house. He must disguise himself as a beggar. Now it is the turn of others to be tested, to show whether they will still serve him loyally. The shrewd Ulysses always was a bit of a practical joker. There is something sinister about the trickster, who manipulates the fate of others for the godlike pleasure of watching their helplessness. The joker is omniscient, his victims are blind, like those hapless people in candid-camera programs. What the gods did to him, Ulysses now does to his old servants, to his wife, and, of course, to his rivals.

It is impossible to know precisely what Homer meant to convey in his epic story; but he was certainly dealing with the tension between human autonomy and fate. A grown person has to feel responsible for his or her life. This is to assume that we have some degree of control over life. But the *Odyssey* shows that man is also a plaything of the gods—and this has something to do with exile, too. Anyone who has wandered alone in foreign countries, often without knowing the local language or customs, knows how helpless—indeed, how childlike—this can can make you feel. Your fate really does appear to be in the hands of others, government officials, hotel managers, policemen, or even (who knows) the gods. And if a privileged European such as myself can feel this way, how about that poor Tamil sleeping rough at the Frankfurt railway station? Only after his return to Ithaca can Ulysses wake up as a grown man who knows his way around.

IV.

THERE ARE MANY ways to interpret the *Odyssey*. Dante, himself an exile from Florence, believed that the hero never really wanted to remain at home. Dante's Ulysses was a kind of eternal student who loathed the idea of domesticity, with a wife and children and a nice little dog. Who needed that kind of responsibility? It was all too boring. First he would "win experience of the world"—hitchhike to India, as it were—and have many women and, above all, gather knowledge. Just as Eve could not resist that bite of the apple in Eden, Dante's hero thirsts for knowledge, with the risk of getting burnt, like Icarus. Ulysses returns to Ithaca, just as he does in Homer's tale, but then he takes off again, and ends up entering the infernal gates.

Dante lived in the late Middle Ages, but he was touched already by the spirit of Renaissance curiosity. He admired the hero's wish for knowledge: it cannot be a coincidence that Ulysses's patroness was the goddess of knowledge and wisdom. Yet Dante's Ulysses dies as a result of his quest. Bernard Knox denies that Homer had anything like this in mind; but that does not make Dante's reading of the hero-exile any less interesting. His Ulysses is really the harbinger of the intellectual as a romantic exile. Banishment is his fate by choice. He was almost a man of our time.

And this tradition leads straight to Heinrich Heine, who was already a man of

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our time. A romantic, a poet, a revolutionary, and an intellectual outsider, Heine felt deep nostalgia for his native land, but he preferred to live in Paris. Germany, he said, kept him awake at night. Heine was an outsider as a Jew in Germany. He found it impossible to get an official position, even after he converted—without any conviction—to the Christian faith. He felt like an outsider, too, because he was a free-thinker who could not stand the stuffy authoritarianism of the German states. Heine loved Germany, but at a distance. He would have liked to have died in Germany, but politics and illness prevented his return, and so (like Marlene Dietrich, another ambivalent wanderer from German lands) he died in Paris, which might have been just as well.

Heine was in many ways a typical example of the modern literary exile. The borderline between banishment and emigration was fuzzy. He was, more precisely, an expatriate, someone who has chosen to live his life away from his native country. Expatriates rarely get involved in the politics of their homelands. Their aim is more to find a place among strangers where they are free to do and think as they please. Many expatriates are writers or artists, and often homosexuals, too.

Heine was involved in politics, but not specifically the politics of his homeland. His politics were more a kind of heroic idealism. He was less a democrat than a man who thirsted for action, against the clerisy and the aristocracy. Freedom was a kind of religion for him; Saint-Simon was his hero for a while. He wrote that "freedom is a new religion ... the religion of our times.... It is the French, however, who are the Chosen People of the new religion, the first gospels and dogmas were recorded in their language."

During the last 200 years, often in the name of socialism or communism, freedom was the typical religion of outsiders in exile. For obvious reasons, Jews found it a particularly attractive creed. The idea of the French as the chosen ones, as though they were the descendants of the Jews, was typical of Heine's brand of Francophilia. But Heine rarely wrote anything without irony. However much he felt the pull of revolutionary action, he was too much of a skeptic to get totally carried away by political passions. Heine remained an outsider, even in revolutionary circles, whose gaze was never uncritical. The German revolt against the monarchy in 1848 left him on the sidelines, following events from a distance, without committing himself one way or the other.

But there is something else that marks Heine as a man of our time: the location of his estrangement. The typical place of exile has shifted, from the desert and the cold, windswept plains beyond the borders of civilization, to the metropolitan centers of the West: London, Paris, Berlin, New York. And political action, plotted in cafes and public libraries, would play an increasingly important role in the life of exiles. Exile from Rome, in the age of Augustus, or from Florence, in Dante's time, meant the loss of liberty, the civil rights of a metropolitan citizen. The modern exiles in our great cities, however poor or lonely, almost invariably enjoy more freedom than the citizens of the countries that they left behind. Marx could rant as much as he wanted against the British philistines, who were too stupid to revolt, despite the sage's predictions; but he stayed in London because he was at liberty to design his proletarian utopia.

Hermann Struck, "Heinrich Heine," 1922

London was a center of European revolutionary activities after the disasters of 1848, just as London is a center today for Arab or African politics, or New York for the Chinese diaspora. It is not an easy life, in this twilight world of émigré journals, shabby apartments, and personal feuds, fed endlessly by old animosities and political frustrations. Time, in this kind of exile, often appears to have frozen. People live only for the future, and once it finally dawns on them that the desired future will never come, they live only in the past. I have seen many examples: Chinese intellectuals, who once advised government leaders in Beijing, subsisting in rented rooms in Queens, in a mess of old newspapers and magazines which almost nobody reads. Since exile was supposed to be temporary, these fallen men never bothered to learn English or read an American paper. Before they know it, it is too late to return; they are stranded, their place gone, their way back cut off forever. They might as well be dead.

It does not have to be this way. Sometimes an exile will go home as a revolutionary hero. But the point is that exile has become a phenomenon of the free, big city—like alienation, existentialism, postmodernism, and multiculturalism. The outsider—romantic, sexual, ethnic, whatever—is described and often celebrated in our metropoles, and the key word is often "exile". Christopher Isherwood's English novels came from the homosexual world of Berlin in the 1930s. Joyce wrote about Dublin in Trieste and Paris. Burroughs brooded on his American sexual delirium in a hotel room in Tangiers. Salman Rushdie wrote in London about his fantasies of Bombay. What started with Heine became almost mainstream in the twentieth century.

Again, I do not wish to appear frivolous. Writers and other exiles did not always move abroad for fun. Joyce chose to live abroad, so he was in fact an expatriate. But Roth, Feuchtwanger, Zweig, Schoenberg, Weill, and many others had to flee for their lives. Still, long before the 1930s, the difference between self-imposed exile and banishment had become vague, or ceased to exist altogether. By the end of the nineteenth century, exile had became an attitude, a literary and intellectual way of observing the world. Baudelaire saw the writer as a detached flâneur, a mocking dandy in the big-city crowd, alienated, isolated, anonymous, aristocratic, melancholic. For Joyce—and not just for him—isolation and detachment were necessary conditions for writing literature. "Silence, exile

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and cunning" was his prescription, or at least that of Stephen Dedalus, his literary alter ego.

A WRITER HAS to operate alone, as a stranger among strangers. Joseph Brodsky, whose departure from the Soviet Union was hardly voluntary, wrote that being a writer in exile "is like being a dog or a man hurtled into outer space in a capsule (more like a dog, of course, than a man, because they will never retrieve you). And your capsule is your language." Like Joyce, he believed that exile was good for a writer; you were alone with your language. Exile provided distance, the same distance that Heine needed in order to think about Germany in the night. Exile, in this sense, is not so much metaphorical as metaphysical; it gives meaning to a way of life.

Many were forced into exile before and after World War II. But the middle decades of the last century also saw exile and the outsider, or the outlaw, emerge as the main subjects of European literature. Camus wrote about little else. (His Eden was in North Africa.) But you did not actually have to leave home to be able to identify with *l'étranger*. Everyone is, in a sense, a stranger. The 1930s were also a golden age for English travel literature, written by romantic wanderers who chose to flee from the grimy industrial cities of modern England, often heading for places of older banishments, where contemporary Europeans were real strangers: hot deserts, uninhabited plains, exotic islands, many miles away from Western civilization. (And speaking of Brodsky's space capsule, it is remarkable how often the figure of the pilot, floating high above the world, blissfully alone in his cockpit, appears in poetry and fiction between the world wars; this was the time of Saint-Exupéry, and of Auden's poems about the pilot. And as a variation on the pilot theme we have the secret agent, moving anonymously among the city crowds, like a Baudelarian flâneur.)

It is quite possible to see the detachment and the weightlessness extolled by Joyce and others as qualities shared by Ulysses (in Dante's version of him, of course). The adventurer, the eternal student, even the criminal, would rather do anything than settle down. Detachment as an ideal held a particular attraction for homosexuals, but also for straight Don Juans. Genet was an extreme example: gay, criminal, without a permanent home. Isherwood, in Berlin and Los Angeles, was a less extreme case. And leaving aside the quality of their prose, about which we might differ, we should consider also Henry Miller, an American in Paris, and Lawrence Durrell, an Englishman in Egypt.

V.

AND YET DETACHMENT, like everything, has its limits. Joyce might have seen distance and isolation as necessary conditions for writing his masterpieces, but the loneliness of the modern *étranger*, and the absurdity of a weightless, unbounded existence, made others thirst for engagement, a kind of solidarity—if not with a particular nation or people, then with humanity in general, or at least with that part of humanity living in what came to be called the Third World. This is how a fashion for Maoism, the most extreme revolt against individualism, could follow from a fashion for alienation.

But extreme nationalism has also cast its spells. A number of Japanese artists and writers moved to Europe at the beginning of the last century, to find a refuge from the narrow provincialism of Japan. There they were, living in exile, as it were, mostly in Paris, gathering knowledge, searching for love, painting pictures, writing poems, and seeking the key to their innermost souls in the anonymity of a foreign crowd. And it was precisely these same people who often returned home in the 1930s, with a sigh of relief, to bask in the motherly embrace of the Japanese nation, which was being whipped just then into a mood of xenophobic hysteria. Scorched by their lonely travels, some became the fiercest war propagandists once they got home.

My intention, in citing these examples, is not to plead against the spirit of adventure, promiscuity, curiosity, or freedom abroad. On the contrary. I am no stranger to wanderlust myself. What I am trying to get at, rather, is the tension between political engagement and intellectual independence. Said has written about this, without quite resolving the problem. He has made great claims, for independence as well as engagement. His argument is that an intellectual should always stand up for the poor, the weak, and the disadvantaged. The free thinker should resist the dominant powers, which means, in his case, Israel and the United States. But, while going about his acts of resistance, he should also guard his independence. The question is whether this is always possible. Can you be a spokesman for a political movement—as Said was for many years a spokesman for the PLO—and remain independent? I am not so sure.

One solution to this dilemma is to plump for an offshore kind of engagement—a detached involvement, so to speak. The intellectual abroad, a Sikh in Toronto, say, or a Palestinian in New York, or a Jew in Washington, calls for action, sometimes violent action, to be carried out thousands of miles from his home, the consequences of which he will not have to bear. Engagement of this kind can easily become a politics without responsibility. This type of politics, like modern literary exile, might be metaphorical for the "exile" in New York, Paris, or Toronto, but not for those living in India, Jerusalem, or Gaza. Said called his stone-throwing stunt on the Lebanese border a "symbolic gesture," a metaphorical throw of a metaphorical stone. But stones in the Middle East are seldom metaphorical. They hurt; they result in greater violence. People die when they are cast.

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT CAN be essential. But too often it results from intellectual frustration. Intellectuals do not have much power outside the universities, nor much influence in modern democracies. This is because Western intellectuals, since the Enlightenment, have managed to gain their independence. They have fought themselves free. Unlike in China, where the notion of the independent intellectual barely exists, Western intellectuals represent nothing but their own ideas. They are not, or they should not be, a band of scribes who guard the dogmas that justify the powers that be. Instead they are obliged to take their ideas to the marketplace, and that is the way it should be. For intellectual independence is quickly sacrificed once ideas are made to serve a political organization, or a government. (Even this might be essential, on occasion; but one should be clear about the sacrifice involved.)

Many intellectuals would like to represent more than themselves. The Republic of Letters is puffed up with political ambition. The great revolutionary ideals, which intellectuals once served as secular priests, are out of fashion for the moment; but the multicultural society in which we live, if we live in the great cities of the Western world, offers new opportunities for intellectuals to play a public role. Especially in the United States, the identity politics of minorities have become increasingly significant, and the identities to be promoted are often based, partly owing to a lack of historical or cultural knowledge, on a sentimental sense of collective victimhood.

In such a setting, the shrewd thing for a politically ambitious intellectual to do is to act as the spokesman for such feelings. By identifying himself with the plight of more or less discriminated against minorities or other forms of collective suffering, the lonely intellectual manages not only to escape from his isolation, he also becomes a symbol of that suffering himself, and so obtains all the perquisites and privileges that go with it. In this way,

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the ideas of these self-appointed spokesmen become sacrosanct; and challenges to them are quickly seen as bigoted attacks on the minorities themselves.

My point is certainly not that intellectuals should not stand up for society's victims. They can and they should. But they must not do this by pretending to be victims themselves. For that is a false identification. To don the bloody mantle of real victims is not just in bad taste, it also trivializes actual suffering. It transforms victimhood into a fashion accessory. The soi-disant exile status might attach a certain glamour to the writer in London or New York, but it does nothing for the poor Tamil trying to get some sleep in Frankfurt station.

The cult of victimhood, marginality, and exile has also had a paralyzing influence on the academy, where literature, anthropology, and even history are difficult to discuss anymore without being cuffed in the fetters of postcolonial discourse. The notion of exile, especially from the Third World, has given postcolonial intellectuals the sacred task of attacking the "cultural imperialism" of the Western metropole. Imperialism is the Great Satan, and intellectuals compete to become the new priests of the postcolonial dogma. One of the main dogmas is that "hybrid," "marginal," and "postcolonial" writing should undermine the imperialist, even racist propaganda of the European literary canon.

There is something to be said for this. Any culture or tradition is bound to be rejuvenated by outside influences. And the idea that the Western canon should be surrounded by some culturally impregnable moat is silly. Yet this so-called marginality is often a form of intellectual self-celebration, for the new influences rarely penetrate from anywhere outside the Western world. Glamorous exile, the "hybridity" of literary style, the attack on cultural imperialism of the metropole are in fact products of that same metropole, and have become part of a dogma which is exported to the rest of the world. Bookstores in Beijing or Bombay are full of books that evangelize the postcolonial, multi-cultural, anti-imperialist gospel; and the authors of these gospels live in New York, London, or Cambridge. They live in a closed world of theory, in metaphorical exile, far from the problems of real victims, of people who are forced to live in real exile. Worse than that, multicultural theory has led to ethnic and sexual divisions of labor in intellectual life: more and more, women write about women, gays about gays, blacks about blacks, and so on. This is not hybridity or marginality in a positive sense. It is merely a new form of discrimination.

One way of creating more clarity in these matters is to separate metaphor from reality, or what Confucius called "the rectification of names." We need to agree that the word "exile" means banishment, not loneliness. A writer or an intellectual might operate in the margins of a modern, democratic society, without political authority, but that does not make him an outlaw or an exile. And surely it is time to cast aside the assumed badges of victimhood. For then we would be better able to recognize the real victims, as well as maintain our intellectual independence. As for those who find an intellectual odyssey too burdensome, they are best advised to seek another occupation. ■

Location, Location

By Lawrence Lipking

Thomas Gray: A Life by Robert L. Mack

(Yale University Press, 718 pp., $39.95)

The night before he died while conquering Quebec, General James Wolfe is reported to have been so enthralled by Gray's "Elegy" that he said that "I would rather have been the author of that piece than beat the French tomorrow." The story may or may not be true (it depends on an old man's recollections), but there is no doubt that Wolfe did care for the poem. His copy, a gift from his fiancée, survives with his appreciative annotations. He specially marked the most famous passage:

> The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
> And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
> Awaits alike th' inevitable hour.
> The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Many readers still share Wolfe's reaction. Whether or not "Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard" keeps its traditional place as the best-known and the best-loved poem in English, it often seems to be the one poem that matters to people whose lives do not have much poetry in them. It is the great memento mori in English literature, a reminder not only of death but also of buried feelings. Under its spell, football coaches and generals momentarily grasp the unimportance of winning. I know a retired lawyer in his nineties who loves to quote lines from it whenever he gets a chance; and it kept running through the mind of another lawyer I knew while he was dying. Such men of business somehow manage to recognize a part of themselves in Gray's sensitive soul.

Relations between the powerful and the obscure, between public acclaim and private reservations, are inscribed of course in the "Elegy" itself. Dramatically, the poem follows a man who haunts a country churchyard at evening, trying to decide where he belongs. Should he strive for an imposing tomb inside the church, or rest outdoors in the ground with the common folk? Eventually he chooses a pastoral spot beneath a thorn tree, set off by itself. (Gray found a middle way; he was buried in a family tomb just outside the church at Stoke Poges.) But mostly he stands apart, unwilling to join any party. Such shyness is captivating. The "Elegy" absorbs each reader in an intimate, anonymous loneliness, a privacy like that of the grave, and thus persuades us individually that we are in a class of our own.

A brilliant shift of pronouns (first noticed by Bertrand Bronson) helps to draw us in. The first stanza concludes with "me":

> The Curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
> The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
> The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
> And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

But the poet or speaker never refers to himself in the first person again. Instead, by line ninety-three he has turned into "thee": "thee, who mindful of th' unhonour'd Dead / Dost in these lines their artless tale relate." Through a sort of osmosis, the sympathetic reader has now

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identified with the speaker of the poem, while the poet retreats to the second person. Then, in a final stroke, a "hoary-headed swain" invites us to read the epitaph, in which the poet mourns himself as "he," "A Youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown." Critics who try to unravel these shifts have come up with ingenious theories. But in practice few readers are bewildered. Captured by Gray's point of view, we find it easy to see ourselves in the churchyard, whether as tenants or as guests. The art of the poet erases distinctions of "me" and "thee" and "he," enfolding all singulars into eternal collectives.

Yet the epitaph is also very teasing. "No farther seek his merits to disclose,/Or draw his frailties from their dread abode," the poet implores his readers. But such injunctions rouse precisely the curiosity they try to smother. Just what is this refugee hiding, or maybe confessing? Naturally readers want to discover his story. A few years after Gray's death, his friend William Mason published a life composed largely of the poet's own wonderful letters. The plan, which in effect let Gray speak for himself, impressed Boswell so much that he borrowed it for his *Life of Johnson*. But Mason was prudish, and protected his friend's reputation by bowdlerizing and even destroying some letters, so Gray kept his secrets.

In the long run Mason whetted an appetite that he did not satisfy. So here is the latest biography of Gray—mammoth, exhaustive, determined to spill all the beans. What are its revelations? Its selling point, at least, is very clear. For several decades critics have been complaining about the unctuous codes, beginning with Mason, devised to cover up the obvious truth that Gray was homosexual. Anyone who knew how to read could read this between the lines; but reluctance to face the fact had warped all previous scholarship, masking the poet's feelings and denaturing his art.

The smell of mendacity hangs like a funk in Gray studies. Thus a new biography can open the closet and freshen the air. "Let's not beat about the bush," Robert L. Mack writes. "Gray's chronic depression—his so-called 'melancholia'—was itself surely an incidental symptom of his response to the perception of his own sexual impulse. Few readers of Gray's poetry fail to respond to the subtexts of confusion, guilt, and anxiety that lie just beneath the surface of his work." But how does one prove such assertions? The word "surely" protests too much.

On the face of it, Gray had very good reasons to grow up depressed. He was born in London in 1716, the only one of twelve children to survive, and so he called himself "Il Penseroso." His father was a brute whose violence estranged him from his wife and son, whom he did nothing to support. At eight Gray left home for Eton, where he found a few friends but "never was a boy" (according to Horace Walpole). After he came of age, his one great adventure, a two-year tour of France and Italy with Walpole, the prime minister's son, ended abruptly when they quarreled. (We do not know exactly why, but Walpole, who paid the bills, was probably condescending, and Gray was proud and went back to England alone.) His dearest friend Richard West died in his twenties. The rest of Gray's life was like a prolonged adolescence. He lived in Cambridge college rooms, devoting himself to the quiet routines of a scholar. Though mildly sociable, he did not teach and published very little. On long vacations he communed with nature. Such activities left him with plenty of time to hang around churchyards. He died of uremia in 1771.

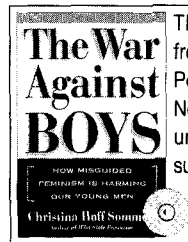
English poets of the middle of the eighteenth century inherited melancholy as a birthright, a sign of superior breeding and feeling if not a positive pleasure. Writing to West, Gray described his own habitual "white Melancholy, or rather Leucocholy" (white bile rather than black) as "a good easy sort of state, and *ça ne laisse que de s'amuser.*" Nor did homosexual poets have any monopoly on bile: Edward Young, the parson whose *Night Thoughts* prepared the ground for the Graveyard School, seems almost morbidly straight.

Depression is a great equalizer, like death. To be sure, Gray's sexual frustration may have helped wrap him in gloom—not only because his yearnings were hidden but because, so far as one can tell, he seldom if ever did anything about them. Did the lack of sex cause his depression, or did his depression keep him from having sex? Not even Gray could have known the answer for sure.

There is also a more general problem. The fame of the "Elegy" has always depended on its appeal to all sorts of people; its sentiments find an echo in every bosom, according to Johnson. But confusion, guilt, and anxiety scramble that echo. Perhaps our bosoms have been out of tune all along? Mack seems to think so. "Does a clear and unapologetic elucidation of the elegy's homoerotic subtext not suggest that we have for years been 'misreading' the poem, or catching only very partial and fragmentary reflections of a luster deliberately dimmed and darkened by the hand of its creator?" Generations of naïve readers have missed the point, evidently. The blindness of ambition, the blighting of lower-class aspirations, the lurking presence of death in life: all this lies merely on the elegy's surface, borne up by the lava of eros. And now, for the first time, we see through Gray's bosom darkly.

But Mack's heart is not really in it. Despite its lip service to queering the subject, this biography keeps coming back to human nature. Each moment of Gray's uneventful life is mined for lessons about the enduring truths of existence, accompanied by a chorus of lines from poems. We learn from this book that birth is painful, that youthful joys and hopes are doomed to be shattered, that being good is better than being great, that we become fully human by coping with sorrow. The ancients taught Gray this wisdom, and his biographer passes it on, often quite eloquently.

Yet the open secrets of humanism make an odd fit with the homoerotic subtexts. Queer studies, at its most exciting, has challenged the very idea of human nature. In place of the unified, perennial subject, it puts any number of shifting, conditional roles or social constructions. Some people would never have fallen in love, La Rochefoucauld said, if they had not heard about love. The histories of



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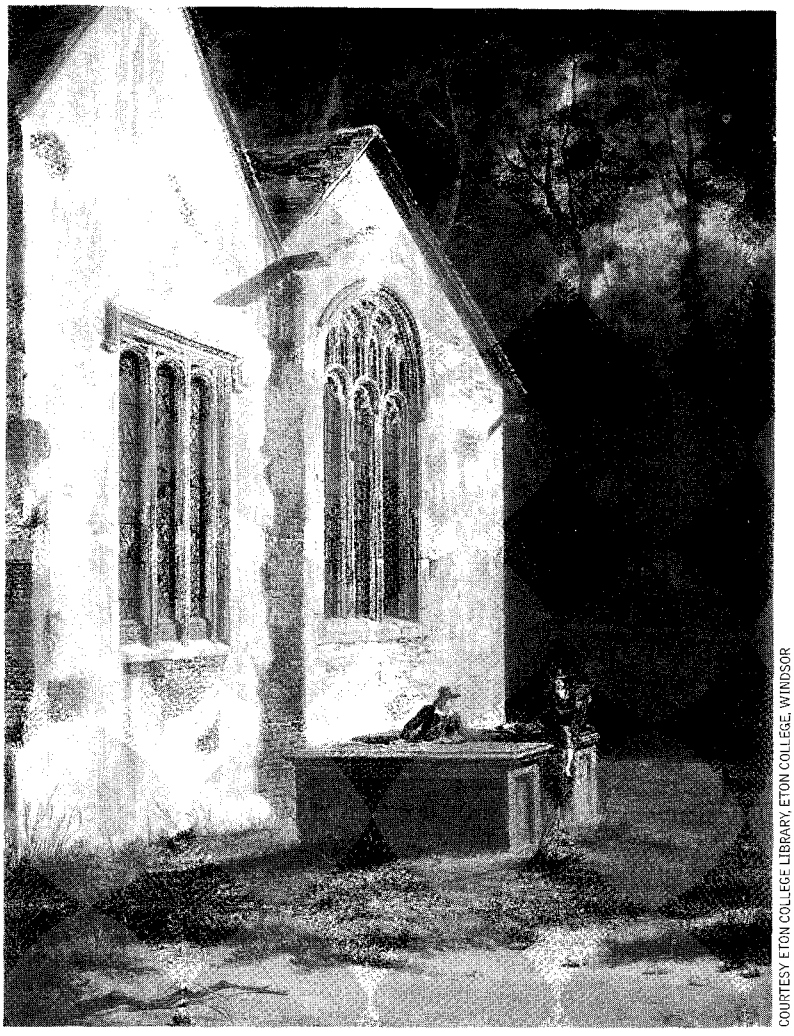
sexuality written after Foucault conclude that people would never have known their own sexual leanings if they had not heard about sex. Without Greek and Latin texts, in garbled schoolboy translations, Gray might have had different dreams. In any case, conventional wisdom implies a continuity in human nature that queer studies denies. So this book is divided against itself. It wants to interpret Gray's life and poems as cryptically Other, but it falls helplessly into sensible, commonplace readings.

In fact this life relies on a model of total, sympathetic understanding. Mack tries to immerse himself and the reader not only in Gray's head, but also in his world. Biographers often talk about walking in someone's footsteps, but this book takes it literally. Like a travelogue, it begins with a leisurely ramble from London to Stoke Poges, then sets out "to trace the alleys and lanes, and to explore the streets and buildings of his earliest years," and then his later years too. Location, location, location. With so much architecture to fill in, there is no room for Gray to be born until page 62. A reader who wants to enjoy this stroll had better relax and savor a world with plenty of time to kill. (Unfortunately, no one found time to proofread. This handsome volume is riddled with errors. "And in my breast the imperfect joys expire," Gray wrote in his sonnet on West, but the line is ruined when "mind" replaces "breast.")



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Hendrik de Cort, Thomas Gray's Tomb at Stoke Poges Church

The test of such understanding has to be its power to open up the poems. Who would care about Gray if he had not left a handful of lines that will not die? From this point of view, his life consists of a few brief bursts of creation: the period just after the death of West, which prompted the "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College," the sonnet on West, and the "Ode to Adversity"; the period after the reunion with Walpole, which produced the "Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat" and probably the first version of the "Elegy"; and one final push, after the "Elegy" had made him famous, when he worked up his two ambitious "sister odes," "The Progress of Poesy" and "The Bard." The sum of finished verses is embarrassingly small (even if one counts some accomplished exercises in Latin). But what else matters? Without these fleeting visits from the muse, Gray's existence would amount only to waste sad time.

Mack combs the poems for bits of the poet's life. Thus he grounds the "Elegy" firmly in the parish churchyard of St. Giles at Stoke Poges, as well as in particular events—not only the death of West but also the death of an aunt and a narrow escape by Walpole. ("What if, Gray must have asked himself, Walpole had indeed been killed by a highwayman's bullet in the park that night?") Such criticism runs the risk of turning poems into logbooks, if not into symptoms of trauma.

Of course every poet draws on a store of personal experiences. When Gray writes of the buried fathers of the hamlet that "No children run to lisp their sire's return,/Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share," it is hard not to compare this idealized family scene with the poet's own desolate childhood and to sense his envy of the kiss he never knew. But too much emphasis on such pathos distorts the effect of the lines, whose "humble joys" are calculated to reproach Ambition and Grandeur. The tone of the "Elegy" is exquisitely controlled, a mixture of compassion and distance that lets us draw on not only the poet's feelings but also our own.

There is a central question about Gray as a man and an artist that this biography tends to avoid. Should he be considered a failure? The sonnet on West begins and ends "in vain," and the same words haunt Gray's career. Even the "Elegy" finally sides with those who sink into darkness. One might argue that this modesty barely conceals high ambitions: "Ev'n in our Ashes live their wonted Fires." But the poet shuns the first person as well as the spotlight. He seems most comfortable viewing himself as an unknown outsider; frustration infects his art as well as his life.

Nor is Gray's place in history assured. No longer an Augustan, not yet a Romantic, more than minor but not quite major, he evades any easy classification. Wavering hours like twilight suit him best. When he planned a history of English poetry—never written, of course—he left his own era out. As a poet, Gray labored to find an original voice. The times themselves were unpoetic, he thought: in the commercial society of mid-eighteenth-century England, "Slaves & Mercenaries" had taken over the arts. Moreover, poetry always sounded best in a language suitably aged or antique. "I converse, as usual, with none but the dead," he wrote to West. "They are my old friends, and almost make me long to be with them."

Hence Gray's verse speaks with the dead. Each of his lines, with few exceptions, adapts a line or two from some earlier poet, with a new twist or gloss. Yet a writer who works this way runs the risk of looking like a glorified schoolboy—self-conscious and sticky-fingered. "The Curfew tolls the knell of parting day" borrows

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a line from Dante, "a bell that seems to mourn the dying day." Gray changed "dying" to "parting" to make the personification of day less obtrusive, and at the same time introduced the clinging atmosphere of death in which the rest of the "Elegy" will be steeped. The effect is highly refined. Yet Gray himself envied Dante's "rude age of strong, & uncontrolled passions, when the muse was not checked by refinement, & the fear of criticism." Like the moon, the eighteenth-century poet glows with reflected light.

A POSITIVE VIEW of Gray might make a virtue of these afterthoughts. A creature born in the wrong place and time, contemptuous of the public, incapable of making a living, sensitive, lonely, and always unfulfilled: is he perhaps the first modern poet? Heroic histories of poetry skip over the eighteenth century, as if Milton passed the torch directly to Wordsworth. But maybe the problem is that Gray seems all too familiar, too classically modern. Poetically and temperamentally, he chimes with T. S. Eliot. The technique of cobbling old lines into something new, the fastidious ear, the dissociated sensibility, and even the torture of struggling with poems make the two poets as alike as cats. In the safety of French, Eliot once wrote that he felt "a sort of astonishment and admiration" at some of Gray's lines, as if witnessing "a miraculous resurrection of the dead." Presumably he recognized himself.

If Gray can still interest postmodern times, it might be through his talent for victimization. That is the tacit subtext of Mack's book, the thread that stitches life and work together. Beneath the seeming privilege of his elite education and canonical status, the poet nurses a wound. He cannot come out as a sexual being or artist; he feels that his life has been wasted or that he has always been most at home with the dead. Hence the sympathy that the "Elegy" strews over anonymous graves—the flowers born to blush unseen, the mute inglorious Miltons—quivers with self-pity. And the response of readers suggests how easily we all succumb. Great and small, soldiers and poets, lovers and loveless identify with the victim.

Near the end of his life, when he had stopped writing poems, Gray fell in love with Charles Victor de Bonstetten, a charming young visitor from Switzerland. There is no mistaking the one-sided passion of this autumnal affair; but it remained strictly platonic. (Gray quoted Plato in warning the impulsive youth against falling for somebody else.) Though Bonstetten was thrilled to be the intimate friend of a famous poet, he seems not to have thought of him as a sexual being. He went away to Paris, heading home. Gray became bitter, then cold; his life was effectively over.

Writing his memoirs more than sixty years later, Bonstetten returned to that time and tried to understand what Gray had been feeling. He admits that much escapes him, but he is still amazed by Gray's aversion to his own poetry. "He would not let anyone ever speak about it. When I quoted some of his lines to him, he shut up like a stubborn child. Sometimes I asked him: *Won't you respond to me*? But not a word came from his mouth." Perhaps the presence of this warm young man—so near and yet so far—pierced Gray with an unbearable irony. He had sold his life for a handful of verses, and now it was the verses, and not him, that someone fully alive had chosen to love.

Yet Bonstetten read that silence differently. Gray's poetic genius, he thought, had been extinguished by the arctic air of Cambridge. "I think that he had never loved, that was the key to the enigma. As a result he was a miser of the heart, in contrast to his deep and ardent imagination which, instead of making his life happy, was only a torment to him." Apparently it never occurred to Bonstetten that he himself might have been able to heal Gray's wound. But he did perceive an unsatisfied need, an emptiness that unified the person and the poet.

That emptiness might account for Gray's hold on readers. Whether or not his innermost secret was that he had no secret, the poems leave us in touch with our inner victim. Everyone qualifies. "Lovers, like the dead, / In their loves are equal," according to Auden, and so are the loveless in their non-loves. Since misery loves company, this thought can be very consoling. The "Elegy" is no more queer than all the rest of us, whatever our hang-ups; there is plenty of room down there to tuck us in. And if Gray was a failure, or thought that he was a failure, his sympathy gave failure a good name. Maybe it even made him a success. ■

Heart of Glass

By EUGEN WEBER

The Mirror: A History by Sabine Melchior-Bonnet translated by Katherine H. Jewett

(Routledge, 320 pp., $27.50)

"MIRROR, MIRROR on the wall," intones Snow White's wicked stepmother. Though she is a queen, the glass questioned in her secret room must have been very small: a *Spieglein*, the Grimm brothers call it. And no wonder. As Sabine Melchior-Bonnet's savory *Büchlein*, bulging with intriguing lore, makes clear, a popular imagination that did not flinch at dwarfs and elves found it hard to envisage a looking glass that would not be petty; and even then attributed it to great ladies only, and to witches.

Mirrors that you look at derive from the Latin *mirari*, to wonder, and *mirus*, wonderful—hence their etymological cousins: miracle, marvel, and also mirage. Looking at yourself was something to marvel at, and very likely a mirage like the illusion that led to Narcissus's drowning. When you did not look at yourself in a pond or a brook, or in some exceptionally shiny stone, the nearest you came to a dubious reflection was in metal. Perseus defeated Medusa the Gorgon by making her look at herself in his shield; but bronze shields were expensive (though Aeschylus in the fifth century B.C. refers to a bronze mirror), and for a long time mirrors were made of copper and tin alloys eventually known as speculum metal.

Even when protected by fabric covers and cleaned with little sponges, these small polished disks were subject to stains, scratches, and rust, and they were rather grubby-hued. Yet their frequently precious settings suggest that they were valued highly—their price (as Seneca tells us, writing in first-century Rome) equivalent to the state dowry of a victorious

EUGEN WEBER is the author, most recently, of *Apocalypses, Prophecies, Cults, and Millennial Beliefs through the Ages* (Harvard University Press).

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general's daughter. And when glass mirrors backed with lead appeared in the third century A.D., metal ones continued to be preferred and used well into modern times.

In the thirteenth century, artisans who made quality steel mirrors as well as glass flasks, glass pearls, and panes of glass settled at Murano, in the Venetian lagoon. Protected, pampered, rewarded, ennobled, these master glassmakers were closely watched by a Venetian Republic wary of foreign spies and industrial espionage. Within two or three centuries they were turning out "divinely beautiful, pure and incorruptible" mirrors, but unfortunately at "excessive prices," as a sixteenth-century Italian complained. But surely not that excessive, if you bear in mind that clear glass of any kind continued to be rare and costly into the eighteenth century, when stained-glass panes far outnumbered anything except the oiled paper that served to secure most windows.

This was all the more reason to value auxiliaries of light and beauty that lent their brilliance to meagerly lit space and extended it by reflecting outdoor scenes into the house. Exported the world over to those who could afford them, Venetian mirrors filled palaces in Isfahan and Lahore as well as the rest of Europe. But they were cut from balls of glass, and so their diameter remained modest, and their shape bulged like the wall mirror behind the Arnolfini couple in Jan van Eyck's famous portrait. Two hundred years after Van Eyck, Velázquez's *Meninas* mirrored themselves in much larger flat sheet mirrors, without the optical distortions of their ancestors. But before that happened, much molten glass would flow through the retorts. As Melchior-Bonnet makes clear, a lot of technical problems—from blowing to casting—would have to be solved, and a lot of credit found (and lost), and a lot of trade wars and price wars fought, and a lot of contraband seized and black markets repressed.

By the fifteenth century, with real Venetian mirrors pricey and scarce as ever, plenty of pocket mirrors made of glass or metal, often enclosed in a box, were being worn on belts, displayed as jewelry, used to groom or adjust bonnets or to reapply rouge to cheeks. Melchior-Bonnet reminds us that the metallurgist Johannes Gutenberg, before he learned to cast movable type around 1440, made glass and metal mirrors, and sold them to pilgrims traveling to Charlemagne's tomb at Aix-la-Chapelle. Attached to their hats, they could capture the grace emanating from the holy relics that crowds made too difficult to approach.

Albrecht Dürer, "Foolish Pride," in "Ship of Fools" by Sebastian Brant, 1494

Small, rare, expensive, valuable symbols of aristocratic luxury no larger than a dinner plate, mirrors continued uncommon or altogether absent—"a precious miracle"—even in households comfortably furnished with tapestries and paintings. Two centuries after Gutenberg, however, Pascal found pretty girls more than ever "covered with mirrors and with necklaces." By his day, aristocrats no longer used steel mirrors (estate inventories do not show them), but there were plenty of common folk to buy them. And an eighteenth-century cutler patented a new steel model for men wanting to learn how to shave themselves.

Pascal died in 1662, one year before Charles Perrault wrote "The Mirror," a dozen pages about the passionate friendship—and the equally passionate breakup—of a lady and a looking glass. In Perrault's time it would remain his best-known story, more so than the tales of Sleeping Beauty, Red Riding Hood, Tom Thumb, and the rest. That was when technological advances accelerated improvements, and fed the mirror market, and sparked a fashionable infatuation with it. All light radiated from the Sun King, and ministers such as Colbert provided incentives that would make the light more radiant—notably the establishment of a royal glass-making company that became known by its site in Saint-Gobain, in northeastern France.

In 1666, the king's protégés produced their first flawless mirror. In 1682, the Hall of Mirrors opened to an admiring public at Versailles, its 306 mirror panes giving the illusion of 18 huge solid ones, their shimmering surfaces expanding the hall almost to infinity. The translation does not make clear that "the Swiss" who laughed at awed artisans craning to see themselves in the great glasses were not transalpine tourists but royal guards. The reactions of the beholders were ecstatic—"unique," "glorious," "splendid," "overwhelming"—but the panes' diameter remained limited.

Cinderella's ugly sisters spent hours before a mirror "where they saw themselves from head to foot." In 1697, when Perrault published Cinderella's story, that possibility was still in the fairy realm—until the Royal Glass Company of Saint-Gobain produced a glass pane almost nine feet tall and three feet across a few years later. And Saint-Gobain's innovations went beyond the realm of technology. Melchior-Bonnet tells us that the

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Those "Palestinian Refugees"

Who are they, what is the real story?

One of the sticking points in the off/on negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians is that of the so-called "refugees", the children and mostly grandchildren of those who left Israel during the 1948 War of Independence. Yasser Arafat insists that there can be no peace unless those "refugees" are allowed to "return" to Israel.

What are the facts?

650,000 "refugees" swell to 5 million. You have heard about those "Palestinian refugees", who claim "right of return" to Israel. Of course, virtually none of them ever lived in Israel -- they are the children and mostly grandchildren of those who fled in 1948. The total number of those who fled in 1948 is estimated to have been about 650,000. Now the number who wish to return has swollen to almost five million!

How did this exodus come about? In 1948, on the day of the proclamation of the State of Israel, five Arab armies invaded the new country from all sides. In frightful radio broadcasts, they urged the Arabs living there to leave, so that the invading armies could operate without interference. They could return after the expected quick victory in that "holy war", get their property back -- *and* that of the Jews. Things turned out differently. The invading armies were defeated. Those who had left became refugees -- people without a country. Those who stayed, and their children, are full-fledged citizens of the state of Israel.

These so-called "Palestinian refugees" have not been allowed to settle in the "indivisible Arab nation". They have been supported in camps since 1948. So far, close to $1.8 billion has been spent on their maintenance. No end is in sight. Who pays for that? You guessed it: Through UNWRA Relief, the United States contributes more than 60% of the total cost.

The Arab countries, among them some of the richest in the world who fritter away their enormous fortunes on undreamed luxuries, are satisfied to leave their Arab brethren in those miserable camps. They have never contributed a penny to their maintenance.

Another side of the "refugee" story. But there is another side to the "refugee" story. Little is heard of the 800,000 Jewish refugees from Arab countries, who fled those countries to settle in the newly formed Jewish State of Israel. Every one of those refugees was immediately accepted, resettled, taken care of, and given full citizenship by the fledgling, impoverished, and embattled Jewish State. There never has been, and there certainly is not now, a Jewish "refugee" camp in Israel or anywhere else.

The Arab "refugees" who fled Israel left little wealth and little history, since most of them had not come to "Palestine" until Jewish settlers opened economic opportunities in what had been a desolate country for centuries. But the Jews of Arab lands have a history going back thousands of years. When forced to flee, they left behind land, wealth, and a long history. They arrived in Israel, quite literally only "with their shirts on their backs." They now make up almost 60% of the vibrant and productive population of Israel. What have the Arabs, the richest people in the world, done with their "refugees" in more than 50 years? They have kept them in misery, on the dole of the world, and have taught their hopeless youth the "skills" of suicide missions and of slaughtering defenseless and unarmed men, women, and children.

> The Arabs are committed not to allow any "non-believers" to be in control of any part of the Middle East. That is the real cause of the "Palestinian refugee problem".

If the Arab nations truly decided to make peace with Israel and to put an end to the century-long strife, they could easily accomplish it by accepting the "Palestinian refugees" in their countries and, just as Israel did with Jewish refugees from Arab countries, integrating them into their societies and making useful citizens of them. In fact, acceptance in their countries might also be offered to the Israeli Arabs, who, despite enjoying a higher standard of living, education, and health than Arabs in any of the surrounding countries and despite having the same civil rights as Israeli Jews, are not happy to live in a Jewish state.

Population transfers are common, especially in the wake of wars. They have been practiced throughout history. In 1923, Greece and Turkey agreed to the resettlement of 2 million Greeks and 800,000 Turks; in 1945, the resettlement of 3 million Germans from Poland and Czechoslovakia was arranged. Following the collapse of its North African empire, France accepted close to 1.5 million people. More than 12 million (!) Muslims and Hindus were exchanged between India and Pakistan. Israel has recognized this historical necessity. The "Arab Nation", with its enormous wealth and vast under-populated lands, has stubbornly refused to face facts.

It is clear that the "Palestinian refugee problem" is a red herring, kept alive by the Arab nations for their political purposes, and with cynical disregard for the great number of impoverished people who live in these camps. It is being kept alive and is being used as a "non-negotiable" bargaining chip, for the purpose of destroying the State of Israel -- a feat that the Arabs have attempted several times by military means, but which has always ended in disastrous failure. Apart from the unsolvable social problems it would create, the introduction of, say, even one-half of the 5 million who claim to be "refugees" would, with one stroke, dramatically alter the demographic makeup of the country and would inevitably destroy the Jewish State. That is of course the whole idea behind the demand for the "return of the refugees". If the Arab nations were willing to solve the "refugee problem", the legitimacy of Israel could no longer be questioned. But that is not acceptable to the Arabs. They are firmly committed not to allow Israel or any "non-believers" to be in control of any part of the Middle East. It is that, and that alone, which is the real cause of the "Palestinian refugee problem".

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mini-welfare state that the company ran in Picardy provided employees with lodging, heat, medical assistance, security of employment, sick pay, and, after 1760, retirement. It distributed clothing, clogs, and provisions in times of scarcity; it banned alcohol sales and limited the hours when workers could leave the compound.

Melchior-Bonnet appears unfavorably impressed by the long working hours (5 a.m. to 7 p.m. with two hours for breaks) and allegedly meager pay (between seventy-five centimes and one franc a day for most) at Saint-Gobain. But twelve- or thirteen-hour days were pretty standard. As late as the 1820s, carpenters' apprentices worked from five in the morning to eight or nine at night, six days a week and a part of the seventh day too, simply for food and shelter. A journeyman carpenter named Agricol Perdiguier marveled when his first employer paid him ten sous a day: it was "an enormous sum." Though Melchior-Bonnet's English readers are not told that a sou was worth five centimes, the fifteen or twenty daily sous of royal glassworkers were far from a bad wage.

The manufacture of large cast mirrors was difficult and dicey. The dirty hues lingered on; the quicksilver backing was fragile, and susceptible to humidity. Trial, error, experience, and skill were cumulative but slow. Poisoning by mercury fumes did not end until the middle of the nineteenth century, when an English process perfected silvering without mercury, and gas-heated Siemens furnaces reduced flaws in the glass, and mirrors lost the grayish tint long detrimental to their clarity.

Meanwhile, no longer selling at the price of a piece of land as they had done under Louis XIV, exceptional luxuries were being converted into necessities afforded by more than the affluent. Technical advances brought prices down, and sales soared throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Mirrors lit up dark quarters, made small rooms look larger and heavy walls look lighter, reflected scenery, and turned nature into an element of interior decoration. They could now be bought in shops that proliferated, especially from haberdashers (whom the *Encyclopedia* defined as sellers of everything and makers of nothing) who offered other products using lens and mirror, such as telescopes and microscopes, as well as chandeliers, jewelry, clocks, and china.

By 1791 a London print showed vulgar customers trying on coats and breeches in front of a half-length mirror at "Snip's Warehouse for Ready Made Cloaths." It was at this time that mirrors invaded the home. They transformed furniture with the introduction of free-standing *psychés*, dressing tables (*toilettes*, *coiffeuses*), powder tables (*poudreuses*), *cabinets de toilette*, and multiple-mirrored *boudoirs*; and they dramatically multiplied the effect of wall-lamps and candelabra.

By the last decades of the seventeenth century, half the houses in Paris had acquired a mirror. A hundred years later, two out of three Parisian homes boasted a looking glass. Outside the capital, though, their numbers remained lower. Less sold on conspicuous consumption, the provincial bourgeoisie maintained the old suspicions of the fragility of mirrors, and of their triviality and lack of substance. Solid middling folk did not mind cushions, lighting, china, better chairs, or even aids to grooming; but brittle opulence could wait. Questionable quality and unreliable distribution also contributed to the slow expansion of mirrors beyond the major cities. Service has never been a French specialty, and potential buyers with indifferent access to the capital's choices faced delivery delays, defective merchandise, inflated prices, and unreliable standards.

In rural areas, where most of the French lived, religious images could be found aplenty, but not so mirrors, which were rare and small and mostly made of metal, out of a peddler's pack. *Mirettes* or *mirochons* might enter a household as part of a dowry or an inheritance, and serve to adjust hair and headgear as they still did in Flaubert's day; yet few country bumpkins aspired to luxuries reserved for urban sophisticates. But then, in the run-up to 1900, illustrated supplements, store catalogs, price reductions, and sales and credit purchases opened the triumphant march of wardrobes whose mirrored doors doubled their opulence.

There were many factors that helped *armoires* to replace linen chests and made mirrors "the first luxury that frugality will permit itself": improved communications; the rise and spread of popular education, and of the popular press; the democratization of specialized rooms, such as bedrooms, furnished according to their functions; the success of department stores and their mail-order catalogs that popularized dressing tables, powder tables, wardrobes, and mirrors. In 1894, the *Bon Marché* distributed one-and-a-half million catalogs. In 1902, it shipped 50 million mail order packages to the provinces. Homes, hotels, restaurants, cafés, entry halls, theaters, casinos, galleries, shops, and even shopfronts throughout the land vied to brighten themselves; and Saint-Gobain products shared in the exponential growth.

From Aeschylus to Stendhal to Cocteau, mirrors have furnished analogies and metaphors, and functioned as spies, guides, and confidants; and two-thirds of Melchior-Bonnet's book is devoted to their semantic connotations. Mirrors dazzle, blur, skew, confuse; they distort as Mannerist painters did, who used convex or concave glasses for their optical tricks. Elusive, illusive, delusive, the mirror's messages represent instability, inconsistency, capriciousness, travesties of reality, and derisory dreams. Venus the temptress, born in water, found her first mirror there; and supernatural (and probably diabolical) forces linked to the alchemists' art of fire that turns molten glass into a rigid substance often lurk in it. On the eve of the French Revolution, the Swedish Ambassador in Paris employed an attaché who made spirits appear in mirrors and read the future in books stained with blood.

Devil's mirror, Satan's mirror, mirror of illusions and vanities and vices, the glass that distorts perceptions and plagiarizes the tangible world easily lends itself to divination (the technical term for this practice is catoptromancy) and enchantment. Snow White's stepmother follows her prey in her *Spieglein*. Klingsor the sorcerer, the enemy of the Grail, sees Parsifal approach in his magic mirror. The devil lurks behind men, more often women, who interrogate their reflections. Usurper of light and likeness, Lucifer facilitates false appearances induced by cosmetics, and suggests envy (*in-vidia*), the sin of the gaze. Dante placed Narcissus, fooled by the false currency of appearance, in Purgatory with the counterfeiters. La Rochefoucauld denounced the inconstancy of mirror images, their delusive transience, the mystifications of vanity: "The more one looks at oneself, the less one sees oneself." As Tallulah Bankhead once put it, there's less there than meets the eye.

And there is more, too. Souls could be lost, sucked in by their reflections; shadows could vanish; the looking glass might be soiled by the gaze of a menstruating woman. But even when blurred, misted, or seen through a glass darkly, heavenly light reflected in a tarnished being could bring a human closer to God. The *speculum* was a metaphor of true love, friendship, and self-revelation, and it could lead (as Aquinas suggested) to speculation, hence to contemplation, vision, wisdom. Rabelais's Abbey of Thélème provided its guests 9,332 bedrooms, each with its own mirror, because the looking glass allowed the contemplation of beauty (a gift of God), and encouraged self-examination and self-knowledge. Religious iconogra-

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phy recognized this role, as when the Virgin and Child, stainless mirrors of divinity, held mirrors in which the soul could contemplate itself.

Introspection could be morbid, too. Reflection could stir envy, and, still worse, it might feed pride. So modesty feared its own gaze as well as the gaze of others. Indiscreet, insolent, titillating, mirrors would be prohibited in convents, and eventually in many girls' boarding schools. Nuns, Christian women, girls who were well brought up, dressed, undressed, washed (when they washed), and went about their business with their eyes lowered, or else raised toward heaven.

Yet the multifaceted possibilities of reflection proved too alluring: self-reflection, as in Van Eyck's early-fifteenth-century Arnolfini portrait whose mirror reveals the painter as a witness; self-identification as the reflection of a divine model, as in Dürer's late-fifteenth-century and early-sixteenth-century self-portraits in which the face of God authenticates the face of man. Soon, though, what mattered was less spiritual expectations than social expectations. Western culture had long envisaged life as a great struggle between Good and Evil avid to master men. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it came to picture men making themselves. Mirrors, which once opened access to souls, now offered guidance to selves.

No longer focused on God, the gaze turned to worldly experience (I see, therefore I am) and to the society around (I am seen, therefore I am). No longer bent on self-knowledge, identity would be authenticated by what others saw. Self-consciousness became consciousness of others being conscious of you, and the role of the mirror is now to represent those others, and thereby to mold identity. Society holds up the all-seeing mirror of civility, and the mirror personifies it. It teaches the "natural" grace that only comes naturally after much practice; reveals the artifice that conditions nature into "naturalness"; divulges more spontaneous conformities, more convincing simplicities, more charming improvisations, more appealing simulacra of nature.

The self mediated by artifice produces the demeanor that legitimizes personality, the manners that are the beginning of morals. The seventeenth-century gentleman's blend of modesty, openness, friendliness, sociability, and self-control called for a high degree of dissimulation and disguise. Influenced by Rousseau, his heirs in the late-eighteenth century rejected mannered masks for the semblance of sincerity, the deceits of politeness for more deceptive candor, the distances of distinction for mimicries of equality, fraternity, solidarity.

At the eighteenth century's end, at the nineteenth century's beginning, mirrors overcame conventions and the condemnations of rationalists, once again in alliance with that ostentatious dresser, the dandy: his quizzing glass a prism for ego and the world, his foppery a performance art in which the self serves as spectacle and spectator both. For the watcher watching himself, absent, alienated, self-absorbed, *Je* was truly *un autre*. And when Baudelaire, sixteen years before Rimbaud, addressed the "hypocritical reader" of his *Fleurs du Mal* as "my likeness, my brother," he must have had in mind that same reflected other.

Except for the odd excursion into Flanders and Venice, Melchior-Bonnet's marvelous essay is about France and the French. That is what the French do well. China, where the earliest bronze mirrors have been found dating back to the eighth century B.C., does not exist. The mirror-bedecked, light-streaming rococo of Austria and Bavaria is ignored. Although one paragraph steps through the looking glass with Alice, British technological breakthroughs and marketing ventures rate hardly a mention. Never mind that, after Newton in 1672 devised a reflecting telescope that used speculum metal, a Scotsman in Edinburgh was selling telescopes as ordinary workshop wares in the 1740s; and that the first practical mirrors for lighthouses were produced in Liverpool in 1777. There is a metaphor for you!

But how many courses can even a banquet accommodate? Melchior-Bonnet has followed her passions, and done it with learning and flair. The ancient Chinese, those who could afford it, carried their mirrors to the grave: the bronze disks would serve as a source of light to illuminate the darkness of the tomb. Melchior-Bonnet's tome testifies that, for the living too, mirrors provide excellent company. ■

An American Abuse

By Jeffrey Herf

"Communazis": FBI Surveillance of German Emigré Writers by Alexander Stephan

(Yale University Press, 350 pp., $29.95)

America's warm reception of German intellectuals, artists, and scholars driven into exile by the Nazi regime is a familiar tale. In this grim and important book, Alexander Stephan has used the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act to unearth a different side of the story. Through remarkable persistence and creative research, Stephan is able to document a disgraceful chapter in the history of the FBI and other American intelligence services, namely their surveillance and destruction of the rights of privacy of liberal, left-liberal, and sometimes Communist German refugee writers during the 1940s and 1950s.

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"Communazis," the term of abuse used by J. Edgar Hoover and other "intelligence" officials to refer to the exiles, captures the ignorance and the lack of differentiation with which the FBI and American intelligence engaged in surveillance of the exiles. The FBI violated privacy rights, and wasted much time and taxpayer money, detailing the daily affairs of people who intended no harm to the United States. With little apparent political oversight, the intelligence agencies created understandable bitterness among exiles who had every reason to be grateful to the United States and to want to help the country that gave them refuge in their hour of need. In the midst of World War II and the Western coalition with the Soviet Union, Hoover's priority remained his crude and provincial anti-communism.

The German exiles were overwhelmingly liberal and left-leaning—understandably enough in the light of (or, rather, in the darkness of) Nazi persecu-

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tion and European anti-fascism. The openly Communist among them gathered in Mexico City. In the United States, their dominant strain was that of the Popular Front, and their primary goal, after saving their lives and the lives of relatives, friends and colleagues, was to aid in any way they could to bring an end to the Nazi regime in Germany. Hoover, driven by an obsessive, nativist, and provincial anti-communism, displayed no understanding, and no sympathy, for European anti-fascism. As a result, instead of seizing on the presence of the exiles as an opportunity to bolster the war against Nazi Germany, he and other officials of American intelligence organizations viewed the exiles with varying degrees of suspicion and hostility, consistently violating their rights to privacy and insuring that those ill-disposed to the United States had their stereotypes of this country confirmed.

Even during the four years of American engagement in World War II, when the United States and Great Britain were allied with the Soviet Union, the FBI continued its meticulously executed and politically counterproductive surveillance of German refugee writers whose political views were, in most cases, practically identical to those of the Roosevelt administration. Stephan's research indicates that, to put it mildly, the spirit of wartime anti-fascism and the anti-Hitler coalition did not percolate into the FBI and other intelligence agencies. When the world hung in the balance and Hitler had not yet been defeated, Hoover and others kept their focus solely on the Communist threat.

Stephan gained access to fifty dossiers with fourteen thousand documents produced by the FBI, army and navy intelligence services, the OSS (Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the CIA), the Office of Censorship (whose job was to intercept and examine mail), the State Department, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the House Un-American Activities Committee. Trampling on safeguards concerning wiretaps and house searches, Hoover's FBI gathered information about the exiles' political projects and plans for post-Nazi Germany, their financial hardships, their literary plans, and of course their sexual orientation and love affairs. American intelligence did all this ugly work in New York and Los Angeles and Mexico City.

The services compiled nearly one thousand pages on Thomas Mann and his family—the same Mann who delivered powerful anti-Nazi radio broadcasts for the American government, and who was honored as the leading voice of the anti-Nazi German exiles; four hundred pages on the Communist-leaning Bertolt Brecht; a thousand pages each on the best-selling and Communist-leaning novelists Lion Feuchtwanger and Anna Seghers. The list of other writers in American exile who were placed under surveillance included Heinrich Mann, Thomas's left-leaning brother, Erich Maria Remarque, the author of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and Franz Werfel, Oskar Maria Graff, Hermann Broch, Bruno Frank, Leonhard Frank, Alfred Döblin, Ernst Bloch, and Ernst Kantorowicz. In Mexico City, where the German Communist emigration was centered, the services kept track of Egon Erwin Kisch, Bodo Uhse, and Ludwig Renn, as well as the leading political figures of the Communist emigration such as Paul Merker, Alexander Abusch, and Otto Katz.

Stephan argues that the American intelligence agencies cast this net of surveillance over these writers because they were foreigners—Germans, and thus enemy aliens, citizens of a country with which the United States was at war within a short time. They were also considered to be (and many of them were) fellow travellers or Communists; and after 1943 they were potential participants in the policy debate about the new Germany that would be formed after the destruction of Nazi Germany. Stephan acknowledges, in a spirit of fairness, that the "agencies warped only a few lives in a serious way, and in no case were able to achieve threatened deportations and internments."

American skepticism about Stalin's Soviet Union and concern about the activities of Comintern agents was entirely in order, even in the midst of the war. Yet there is no indication in the files that Stephan consulted that the FBI found anything to confirm that the exiles posed a threat to the United States, nor did the FBI produce information that might help the United States win the war against Nazi Germany. What the FBI accomplished, instead, was that its surveillance and suspicion undermined an obvious opportunity to build goodwill between the United States and some of the earliest and most vociferous opponents of the Nazi regime. All of the exiles in Mexico City, and some who were able to come to the United States, notably Brecht, returned to play prominent roles in East Germany. As Communists and radical leftists they were certainly inclined to be harshly critical of American capitalism; but the surveillance that Stephan documents would certainly cause added hostility toward the United States—a country, after all, that had helped to save their lives. This lost opportunity to build bridges should also be placed in part at the feet of wartime American "intelligence."

For most of the world observing Nazi Germany from the outside, resistance to the Nazi regime was a badge of honor; but (as Stephan writes) "this attitude did not recommend them to Hoover's Bureau," whose officials had professional contacts with European police in the 1930s at a time when exiled writers were "already on the wanted lists of these very same police." So instead of helping to welcome the exiles or to enlist them (as did other parts of the American government) in the fight against Nazism, the FBI subjected them to physical surveillance, phone taps, electronic listening devices, searches without warrants, and denunciations—usually inaccurate—from anonymous informants. Ronald Reagan's willingness to supply the FBI with information about people in Hollywood when he was president of the Screen Actor's Guild is a matter of public record. Stephan found that Walt Disney gave Thomas Mann's name to the FBI as someone about whom it should be concerned. The FBI and intelligence service files are also filled with the published works of the exiles themselves, books and essays that left the snoopers unconvinced of the virtues of left-wing anti-fascism.

The Foreign Nationalities Branch of the OSS, in contrast to the FBI, had a keen understanding of exile politics, and was primarily interested in how and whether the exiles in the United States were establishing links with the Communist exile community in Mexico City and the National Free Germany Committee in Moscow. To find out, the OSS officers did the sensible thing: they read the newspapers and the journals that the exiles wrote, and in that sensible way found out what they needed to know. Yet the OSS and the State Department, in contrast to the British efforts to support the Free French under de Gaulle and the Poles in London, sought to undermine the exiles' efforts to establish an umbrella organization that would seek to influence American wartime and postwar policy in Germany.

The FBI was not the only agency that reached into the exiles' lives. The INS was no more enamored of the anti-fascist refugees. It kept many exiles from taking jobs. It required periodic visa extensions. It asked for documents that were available only in Nazi-occupied Europe, and held the threat of deportation over even the most famous and seemingly the most secure exile of all, Thomas Mann himself. In the end, though, none of the writers were deported, or interned for long periods of

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time; and no efforts were made to revoke their American citizenship.

Stephan points out that one of the least well known of the wartime surveillance agencies, the Office of Censorship, was particularly intrusive. Founded in 1941, by 1943 this government agency had 1,678 "examiners" and 2,006 translators working in seventy-three languages. To censor a refugee's mail, the FBI only had to petition to place him or her on a "National Censorship Watch List" for thirty, sixty, or ninety days. These activities were especially important for mail to and from the Communist-leaning German exiles in Mexico City and exiles in the United States. Mail was read, seized, delayed for weeks or months, and in some cases destroyed.

The Los Angeles office of the FBI, combined with the California legislature's Un-American Activities Committee of the 1940s and 1950s, were so assiduous in their surveillance of the German exile literary scene that Stephan mordantly describes their efforts as "the world's first center of German exile research." The FBI knew about the exiles' daily lives—their drinking habits, their mistresses, their financial problems—as well as their privately expressed political opinions and their plans for a post-Nazi Germany. When Lion Feuchtwanger dined at the Soviet consulate or Bertolt Brecht met the Russian vice-counsel in Santa Monica, the FBI was watching. Merely parking her car on the street near the Communist Party's office in Los Angeles earned Johanna Kortner, the wife of the actor Fritz Kortner, a place in the FBI's files.

THOMAS MANN HAD a relatively small FBI file, as Hoover concluded that he was not a threat to the United States comparable to Bertolt Brecht or Hans Eisler. But Stephan's examination of files from the Foreign Nationalities Branch of the OSS and the State Department indicates that those agencies viewed with alarm Mann's unsuccessful efforts to lead a kind of German government in exile and to help to shape plans for a postwar Germany. In the early 1950s, when Mann emerged as a critic of the Cold War and McCarthyism in the United States, the INS and the FBI explored the possibilities of canceling his American citizenship and deporting him. The issue became moot when Mann, whose wartime essays and addresses were filled with admiration for Roosevelt's America and hatred for Hitler's Germany, decided to move to Switzerland in 1952 and leave behind a climate, as he put it in his diaries, of "intensifying chauvinism and persecution of any nonconformity." Perhaps Mann would have decided to return to Europe in any case, but his departure under those circumstances was an opportunity lost to deepen ties to anti-Nazi Germans who were working to build a different Germany after 1945.

Heinrich Mann, Thomas's left-leaning brother, also a novelist, a leader of Popular Front anti-fascism in France, and a friend of some leading Communist exiles in Mexico City, lived the solitary and financially precarious life of an aging exile in Los Angeles, where he died in 1949. Though the author of the novel *Professor Unrat*, on which the film *The Blue Angel* was based, Mann did not enjoy public recognition in the United States—but his left-wing politics aroused intense interest from the FBI, the Office of Censorship, Army and Navy Intelligence, the OSS, the INS, the Intelligence Service of the Internal Revenue Service, and branches of the State and Treasury Departments.

In the final FBI report on Heinrich Mann in August 1950, the head of the Los Angeles office, R. B. Hood, wrote that he "appeared to be a liberal and 'fellow trav-

Virginia History

David Cuff, where in the fifth grade
did you get that husky voice,
that voice from a room full of smoke
and the bodies of women swaying?
"Sittin in the moanin sun,
I'll be sittin when the evenin comes,"
you sang to me after Mrs. Burnett
had called Jefferson "The Genius of Monticello."
We were to remember that
for the Virginia history identification quiz.

Voice from a room full of smoke
and the bodies of women swaying,
you smelled of cigarettes and a woodstove
and your laugh was like the underside of a log,
damp, warm, coming apart, worked by something
from the biology textbook.

When I looked across Elich Atkins, broad backside
and broader back and saw you on defense,
grinning linebacker of the apocalypse,
I knew I would not complete the pass.
I knew I would hear that laugh
through the earhole of my nearly unscarred helmet.

What brought you back David Cuff
was a voice on the radio, a voice
not as freighted as I remember yours,
and after the song the talk
of black and white and black always knowing
blackness and white not living daily with the knowledge
of whiteness, not noticing, even today,
the white artists always juking the black artists
only toning it down, ha, ha, ha, ha,
the anger of the black artists, the integrity
of some white producers, the greed of white
record companies, the records,
the black records becoming white records.

David Cuff, I have to remember I once loved you.
I have to remember the chalk dust on Mrs. Burnett's fingers,
the coat racks, your coat, my coat, arm in arm,
your laugh in the earhole of my helmet
and what we were, we were, we were.

Michael Chitwood

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eler' as well as a friend and admirer of the Russian people," attitudes that supplied the FBI with all the justification that it needed to read his mail and to regard him with suspicion. The main reason for the American spooks' interest in Mann lay in his correspondence and his contact with leaders of the Free Germany Movement in Mexico City, primarily with Paul Merker, the only member of the Politburo of the German Communist Party in exile in the West, and his associate the writer Ludwig Renn. The Merker-Mann correspondence concerned reports on political congresses and disputes within the exile groups in Latin America and plans for the exile publishing firm *El Libro Libre*. From intruding into Heinrich Mann's privacy, the FBI learned nothing of political significance that it could not have learned by reading the German-language edition of the exiles' biweekly journal *Freies Deutschland* (*Free Germany*).

THE FILES EXUDE a lack of empathy or understanding for the leftist exiles under FBI surveillance. A report from the FBI office in Los Angeles in 1944 describes Mann as an

> exiled German author who was allegedly assisted by underground in departing from France in 1940.... Has been affiliated in Los Angeles with Bert Brecht and Lion Feuchtwanger, communistically inclined German refugee writers. These three are very active in the Free Germany Movement, aim of which is establishment of postwar German government favorable to Russia. Heinrich Mann is Honorary President of Latin American Committee For Free Germany, the organization under which all Free German movements in Western Hemisphere united.

The term "underground" in place of "the French Resistance," the phrase "communistically inclined" to describe Brecht and Feuchtwanger, and the description of the goal of the Free Germany movement as the establishment of a pro-Russian government in Germany after the war lead Stephan plausibly to argue that the FBI was less concerned with the threat of Nazi sabotage and spies, as well as the need to punish the guilty in postwar Germany, than with the threat of Communism.

Any reader of *Freies Deutschland* knew from a glance at any issue that its Popular Front spirit did not obscure its Communist leadership. Its primary goal during the war was not to establish a German government favorable to Russia, though it certainly supported such a development; it was to win the war and to establish an "anti-fascist" Germany that presumably would have good relations with both the Soviet Union and the United States. That this turned out to be a naïve or unattainable goal does not mean that the exiles—from the liberals in the United States to the Communists in Mexico City—supported goals that were inimical to the interests of the United States in Europe. In those years, the "red menace" remained foremost in the mentality of the FBI and American military intelligence.

AS I MYSELF discovered in working on FBI and OSS surveillance of the German exiles in Mexico, there was a brief period during the years of the Battle of the Atlantic, from 1939 to 1941, when the threat of German submarines was real, and Hoover actually did focus on Nazi espionage in Mexico. (To assist him in his searches, he was willing to use information about Nazi activity in Mexico that was offered by the Mexican leftist labor leader Vincente Lombardo Toledano. Toledano's information was passed to the FBI by an official of the American Communist Party.) Hoover's anti-fascist period left behind a small set of files from the early war years. Though it was the German navy, not the Russian navy, that was trying to sink American ships heading to Europe during the war, I found that the FBI files on "subversive activities in Mexico" during World War II were overwhelming about the Communists rather than the Nazis.

All of American intelligence, the FBI as well as the OSS (in contrast to some insightful reports by the American Jewish Committee and World Jewish Congress), missed the distinctive feature of the German Communist emigration to Mexico. It lay in the fact that, for the first time in the history of German Communism, Nazi persecution of the Jews before and during the Holocaust assumed a central place in the public discourse of German Communists, when Paul Merker and others focused on the issue in the pages of *Freies Deutschland*. With self-assured ignorance, the FBI dismissed this remarkable moment as only a ploy by clever Comintern agents to dupe political innocents. But from 1949, and especially from 1952 to 1956, Merker and other former German exiles from Mexico became victims of the "anti-cosmopolitan purges" in the Soviet bloc when they were accused of participation in a giant conspiracy composed of Jewish capitalists, Zionists, and, of course, American imperialism. The notion that there might be dissident Communists, or German Communists who might be convinced to look as favorably on the United States after 1945 as they did during the era of the Popular Front, was beyond Hoover's blinkered world view.

It was in his efforts to keep tabs on German Communist exiles in Mexico City that Hoover and his agents adopted the term "Communazis." The use of such a term at a time when the United States and the Soviet Union were allies implied that the alliance was a purely tactical affair, that there was no reason to distinguish between Communists and Nazis. The FBI collected almost two thousand pages on the German exile Communists in Mexico, including Anna Seghers, Ludwig Renn, Egon Erwin Kisch, Budo Uhse, Otto Katz, Alexander Abusch, Walter Janka, and Paul Merker. In view of the fact that the East German government purged and arrested Merker and others in the anti-cosmopolitan purge and accused them of being spies for Zionism and American imperialism, Stephan's discussion of a dispute between the State Department and the Office of Censorship in 1943 is particularly instructive. The subject of the debate was whether the Free Germany movement in Mexico could best be curbed by destroying all of its mail or by opening and analyzing it. An OSS interoffice memo in May 1943 argued that destroying the mail was necessary because

> its purpose is evidently now considered inimical to the best interests of the United States.... Apparently it is now considered advantageous to the war effort to throw wrenches where possible into Communist efforts to organize German refugees abroad or at least in Latin America. Such a censorship policy is obviously an advantage to the Social Democratic and related liberal groups among the German refugees in Latin America. It would appear that this country is therefore already tending to recognize the fight against Communist influence among Germans as related to its war effort.

Ironically, in this grand policy debate about whether to destroy or not to destroy mail, the Office of Censorship sided with allies in the State Department in opposition. Free Germany in Mexico, its officials contended, was not important enough to justify the destruction of mail. Moreover, the law allowed the Office to destroy only mail that would harm the war effort, and this ruled out Free Germany because, as an official from the Office accurately put it, the group was "absolutely anti-Nazi and anti-Fascist and wholeheartedly behind our war effort." Still, at the insistence of the State Department, much of the mail of Free Germany was destroyed until 1944.

The files on Thomas Mann's son Klaus,

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that were compiled by the FBI, military intelligence, and the INS between 1940 and 1956, are more than two hundred pages long. They include anonymous denunciations with incorrect information; interviews with Mann himself and with relatives, fellow exiles, the staff of the New York hotel in which he stayed, neighbors, and postmen; intercepted letters; news clippings; and on-site surveillance of Mann's comings and goings in his residence. While World War II raged, the FBI was taking a special interest in Mann's homosexuality.

The thoroughness and the obsessiveness with which the FBI invaded Klaus Mann's private life and that of his friends ("Question: You have no indication whatsoever that he is a homosexual?") is revolting. Mann volunteered to join the American army as soon as war was declared. He was accepted, he received American citizenship in 1943, and he was admitted to the army intelligence service soon after. (His wartime essays, as well as his postwar essays about the war, Nazi Germany, and postwar Germany, are well worth reading.)

THE FOUR HUNDRED pages from Bertolt Brecht's FBI file illustrate Hoover's deep distrust of the exiles preparing to return to Europe who were associated with the Free Germany Movement in Mexico City, as well as the FBI's fascination with Brecht's private life. The FBI learned nothing about Brecht's political views that was not obvious to anyone reading Brecht's plays, poems, or political statements. He sympathized with the German Communist Party, supported the Free Germany Movement, and opposed the participation of any member of the German military or the Nazi party in a postwar German government. And the Bureau's stance towards an exile with these views during World War II and before the Cold War broke out was uniformly hostile.

The general impression of the FBI that one gets from Stephan's book is of a government agency with little political oversight. To be sure, there were limits to Hoover's power. In 1943, for example, the FBI recommended to the Justice Department that Brecht be interned. Assistant Attorney General Attilio di Girolamo passed the Bureau's arguments on to his superiors, but he also pointed out that Brecht's anti-fascism was "compatible with the ideology of a government which is an ally of the United States [the Soviet Union]. Therefore, if internment were based solely on the possibility of a subject's giving aid and comfort to the enemies of this country, there would be no proper cause for his internment." The Justice Department turned down Hoover's efforts to intern Brecht. It preferred Di Girolamo's common sense.

The files reveal the variety of legal and illegal methods of surveillance that the FBI used on Brecht: wiretaps, break-ins, electronic bugs, and simple physical observation. The Bureau noted Brecht's contacts with a variety of prominent liberal and left-leaning people including Charles Laughton, Charlie Chaplin, Billy Wilder, and Alfred Döblin. It probed into his private life, accumulating a considerable file based on surveillance of his mistress Ruth Berlau. To do so, it intercepted her mail, placed bugs in her hotel room, and examined materials taken from her luggage, which agents searched without her knowledge. Stephan concludes that "Hoover's agents read, recorded, translated, indexed, and analyzed hundreds of letters to and from Brecht over the years."

The payoff for all this work was aid to the House Un-American Activities Committee in its preparations for its planned hearing on Brecht. On May 13, 1947, the day before the scheduled hearing, Brecht left New York for Paris and Zurich, and from there he settled in East Berlin. Clearly, Brecht sympathized with German Communism. Obviously he was opposed to capitalism and willing to give the Soviet Union the benefit of the doubt before he arrived in the United States. Still, in the light of the American government's violations of his rights to privacy, and more generally of its suspicion of him due to his leftist views, who could blame him if he returned to Europe with an added measure of bitterness towards the United States?

The file of the Czech exile Communist and future East German author F. C. Weiskopf offers an interesting window into the mind of the wartime FBI. Weiskopf had connections to the legendary anti-Nazi resistance group *Die Rote Kapelle* (The Red Orchestra). Hoover, far from admiring Weiskopf's heroism in anti-fascist resistance or participation in the successful espionage activities that *Die Rote Kapelle* waged against the Nazis, referred in a remarkable memo in 1946 to the "Western European Soviet-espionage networks known as Rote Kapelle." The expression conveys an inability to remember that it was in coalition with the Soviet Union that the Western Allies defeated Nazi Germany.

In April 1945, Hoover sent a memo to the State Department's head of Foreign Activity Correlation urging that, in the wake of the defeat of Nazi Germany, State Department employees should examine the police files of the Nazi and Vichy regimes for information about German leftist exiles who were the mutual opponents in his view of Germany, Vichy and the United States. As Stephan writes, "whoever had trouble with Heydrich and Himmler in Nazi Germany, or was confined in a Vichy internment camp like Le Vernet in France, is regarded by Hoover as suspect. What emerges is the interest of American intelligence, unperturbed by questions of crime and punishment, in collaborating with their colleagues in Nazi Germany and Nazi-controlled France in counterintelligence work against the old and new enemy of both." Just when the United States needed to reach out to the Western European left to contain the Soviet Union—not least by showing an understanding of the causes and the consequences of World War II in Europe—American "intelligence" fostered an undifferentiated hostility to Communists no matter what role they had played in defeating Nazism.

STEPHAN'S DILIGENCE HAS resulted in a powerful book, and an important contribution to a very sad chapter in the history of the United States during World War II. As historians such as Richard Overy and Gerhard Weinberg have recently reminded us, the world hung in the balance during the war, and its outcome was not a foregone conclusion. At a time when all energies were supposedly to be devoted to defeating Nazism, the FBI, the INS, the State Department, and military intelligence "spent substantial resources of personnel and money over a long period both abroad and at home" during and after World War II "to observe a little group of refugees from Hitler."

While acknowledging the unique contribution of the Freedom of Information Act, Stephan believes that the accumulation, the preservation, and the partial release of "some fourteen thousand documents reporting these operations ... says disturbing things about the needs and insecurities of the world's leading democracy." It is true that nobody was murdered, tortured, deported back to Europe, or turned over to the Gestapo. Only a few persons were denied citizenship or entry into the United States. But this is still a cautionary tale. Many people had their rights of privacy violated for years, and we can only speculate about how much stronger the American position in Germany and Europe would have been had the United States government shown more sympathy for the politically active German liberal and leftist exiles. In the name of combating Communism, this terrible policy harmed America's wartime and postwar interests more than it helped them. ■

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Anxiety of Influence

EVERYONE HAS NOTED THE irony of George W. Bush being the education president. But it gets better: W.'s White House contains more novelists per capita than any other in American history. Bill Clinton could tout the sonnets of poet-bureaucrat William Cohen. But Bush can fill entire shelves with the oeuvres of his underlings. Vice President Dick Cheney's chief of staff, Lewis Libby, published a bildungsroman set in Japan's remote snow country. Media consultant Stuart Stevens's bibliography includes travelogues and a satirical novel about Southern politics. Lynne Cheney has produced not only Washington potboilers but also critical essays on Graham Greene, the pernicious legacy of moral relativism, and the epistemological underpinnings of Matthew Arnold. And you don't truly know John Ashcroft—or the pain he is capable of inflicting on his fellow Americans—until you dive into his gospel lyrics.

SO AN ADMINISTRATION GENERALLY thought to consider the executive summary the highest literary form has produced its own artistic canon. But do these disparate works define a common Bush aesthetic? At first glance, the Bushies seem purveyors of a bland, conservative agitprop, not dissimilar from the vague exhortations of their man's campaign. Once you strip away the screwball comedy that characterizes Lynne Cheney's political novels, for example, their message pretty much reduces to W.'s mantra: Halt the politics of personal destruction. Laura Bush even managed to find feel-good Christian conservatism in the "Grand Inquisitor" chapter of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, in which Christ returns to earth to find that the Church hierarchy wants him burned at the stake. "It's about life, and it's about death, and it's about Christ. I find it really reassuring," the first lady told a *New York Times* reporter. In his songs, even Ashcroft couches his moralism in Pat Boone homeyness—as in the following tut-tut against boomer hedonism: "They got four-wheel drives a-turnin'/Credit cards just burnin'/Seekin' kicks and highs on which you can't rely/ ... But the fleetin' highs they're feelin'/Gonna send you rockin' and reelin'."

AND SO IT'S HARDLY A SURPRISE THAT Laura Bush's inauguration-week salute to the American author was largely characterized by the same kind of compassionate conservatism. In addition to the predictable tributes to the incoming administration, the event featured readings by occasional Clinton critic Stephen Ambrose—who followed THE NEW REPUBLIC's lead in comparing W. to Thomas Jefferson, if somewhat more credulously—and the famously prudish mystery writer Mary Higgins Clark. Even writers not known for their conservative pedigrees paid homage to the new president's politics. Stanley Crouch, who once advised Al Gore on race relations, was on hand to read a passage from his novel *Don't the Moon Look Lonesome* describing a preacher's eulogy in a black church: "'We want to pray. We still want to beg for Your mighty compassion. We want to get down on our knees.' Everyone went to their knees.... It was as if the elaborate stillness of death were the only reality within that church, now and evermore. It was too, too quiet to hear anybody pray."

BASED ON THIS EXCERPT, ONE MIGHT imagine that Crouch's book was a somber, devotional homily. Not quite. The novel is, in fact, rather pornographic, filled with detailed depictions of sex and violence, such as the following, set in an S/M club: "There were naked men with bleeding feet hoisted up from the floor and held by chains that formed seats from which their asses hung out. On the floor were cans of Crisco. Men would scoop out the right amount of Crisco and rub it on their forearms and the backs of their hands." I'll spare you the details of what happens next, but Crouch is not so considerate.

CROUCH'S INCLUSION IN THE FIRST lady's salute is more than an oversight; it is a sign that beneath the Bushes' middlebrow moralism lurks another, more transgressive sensibility. During her turn at the lectern, Mrs. Bush—who, for obvious reasons, must be considered the primary critical theorist of the Bush family—delivered a brief, idiosyncratic lecture on the history of American literature. Instead of worshiping at the feet of familiar icons (F. Scott Fitzgerald, Mark Twain) or the gods of political correctness (Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou), she hyped an iconoclastic canon, including the works of radical pamphleteer Thomas Paine, abolitionist agitator Harriet Beecher Stowe, and *Black Boy* author Richard Wright, who, she noted, helps us "understand the boiling rage and desperate yearning of those who were denied full membership in America's promise." (Alternatively, she could have simply looked around at the angry hordes lining the parade route.) And the first lady isn't off the conservative reservation merely on race. She's off it on sexuality as well: According to press reports, she harbors an affinity for Truman Capote.

NOR ARE THE IDEOLOGICAL TRANSgressions Laura Bush's alone. The deeper one delves into the literature of W.'s White House, the less conservative it seems. Stevens's travelogues of aimless wandering across Africa and the Far East contain more than a whiff of Jack Kerouac. His one moment of clear purpose, described in the 1997 book *Feeding Frenzy*, is a heroic attempt to eat at all 29 of Europe's Michelin three-star restaurants on consecutive evenings. But Stevens's real-life gustatory exploits are nothing compared to the sexual libertinism that prevails in Bush administration fiction. *Scorched Earth*, Stevens's contribution, features a senatorial candidate who has sex with his sister-in-law and is accused of performing "the nasty" with three black transvestites. Lynne Cheney's comedy *Body Politic* begins with a vice president dying at the height of adulterous sex. (Cheney refers to the predicament as "carnal arrest.") And, in her now-infamous period piece *Sisters*, Cheney seems to celebrate birth control for liberating female sexuality and depicts rampant lesbianism among women on the American frontier. True, the book's protagonist never quite endorses this lifestyle, but she displays obvious sympathy for it. Observing women locked in an embrace, she "felt curiously moved, curiously envious of them."

THOUGH THE BROAD-MINDEDNESS exhibited in Cheney's novels has not always been evident in her public life, its roots may date as far back as the 1960s, when she wrote her doctoral dissertation on poet Matthew Arnold's debt to Immanuel Kant. As Johns Hopkins University's John Plotz has pointed out in *Lingua Franca*, Cheney links Arnold to Kant's belief that human beings, unable to see beyond mere physical "phenomena," can never know the "real" world. Arnold wrote that, because of this inability to access metaphysical truth, poets should eschew dogmatic and absolutist positions: "Live by thy light and earth will live by hers." Take that, John Ashcroft.

FRANKLIN FOER

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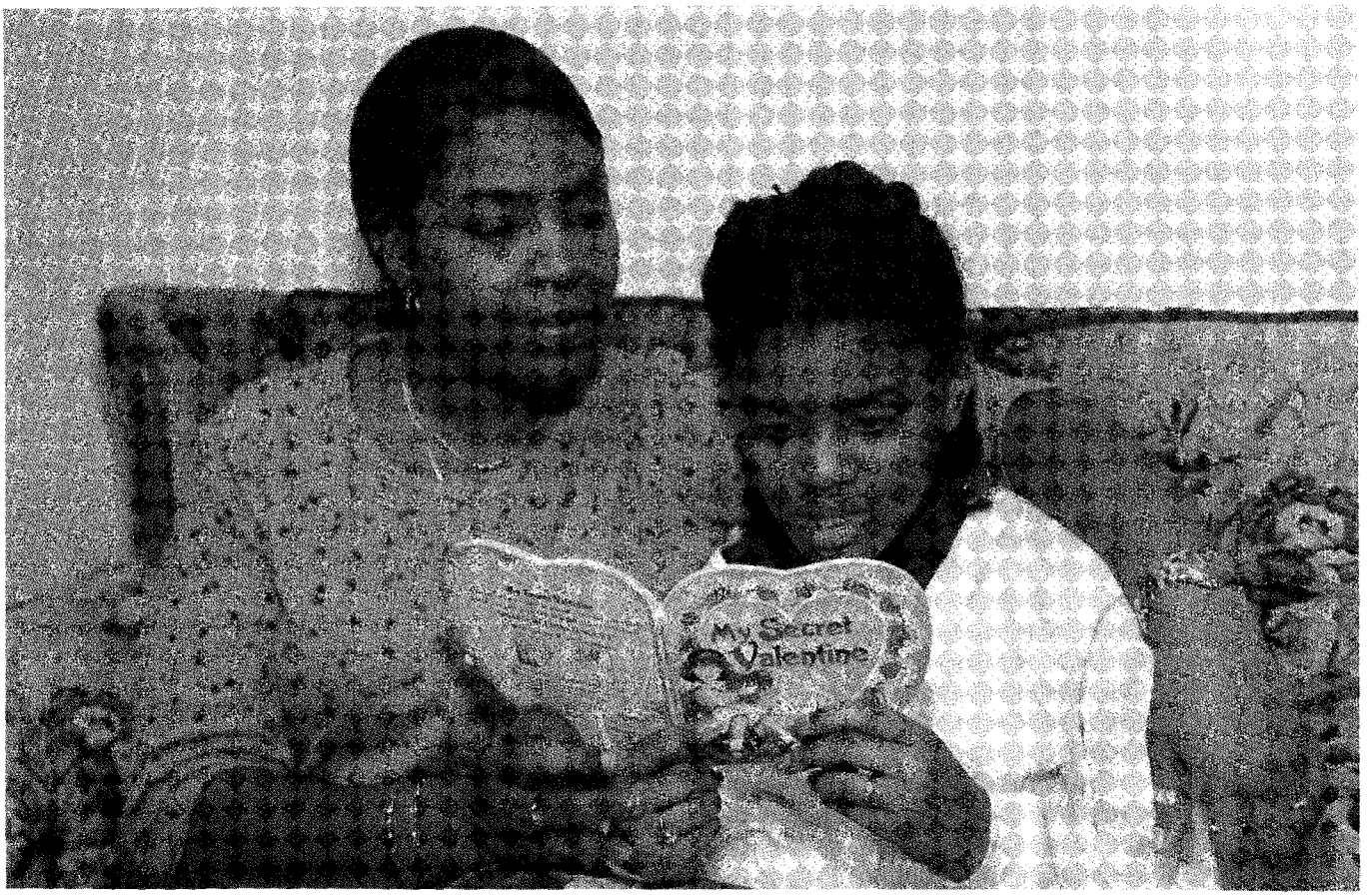

A learning breakthrough: Willetta McVicker, 12, reads to her mom, Carmellett.

Vouchers for Children with Special Needs

While opponents of parental school choice programs claim that private schools don't serve students with special needs, they know that's not true.

Consider these examples, all from tax-supported voucher programs serving low-income parents, parents of students at failing schools, and parents of students with disabilities.

Carmellett McVicker uses the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program to send her daughter, Willetta, 12, to Lutheran Special School, which serves ***only*** students with disabilities.

Says McVicker: "My child is soaring because of what the private school has given her. She just learned how to read. For the longest time, she couldn't make the difference between letters and numbers. Now, she's reading."

Parental School Choice is Widespread — Unless You're Poor

Susan Asid, of Jacksonville Beach, Florida, uses a state-funded McKay Scholarship to send her son, Dylan, 9, to De Paul School, which serves children with varying degrees of dyslexia.

Asid says: "I have been through hell and back to get some help for my child. I could not afford the school without the scholarship. Now Dylan has a chance at success. It's like he's got another lease on life."

In Cleveland, the Hanna Perkins School serves emotionally disabled, low-income children in the Cleveland scholarship program.

According to Hanna Perkins Principal Joan Horwitz: "We deal with children who have emotional conflicts that are bothering them and it's getting in the way of their schooling. We've had children whose behavior would make it hard for them to attend public school."

In Florida, more than 1,000 disabled students use McKay Scholarships to attend private schools that serve their disabilities. The Cleveland program provides extra funding to low-income students with special needs. In Milwaukee, dozens of private schools serve children with disabilities for the same voucher amount as other kids.

"I have non-stop calls from parents wanting to place their children in our school. The majority are low-income parents who want more choices for their children with special needs but can't afford it," says Judy Schultz, Lutheran Special School principal.

Carmellett McVicker agrees.

"I'm a single mom. Without the choice program, I'd have to sell my car to afford tuition. I really need a car to get to work and to pick up Willetta from school. She gets out early because of her disability. If it wasn't for the choice program, I don't know where I'd be."

baeo

Black Alliance for Educational Options

For more information go to: www.schoolchoiceinfo.org

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"NOT SINCE 'THE GODFATHER' HAS HOLLYWOOD TURNED OUT AN EPIC AS POWERFUL AS 'TRAFFIC.'"

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